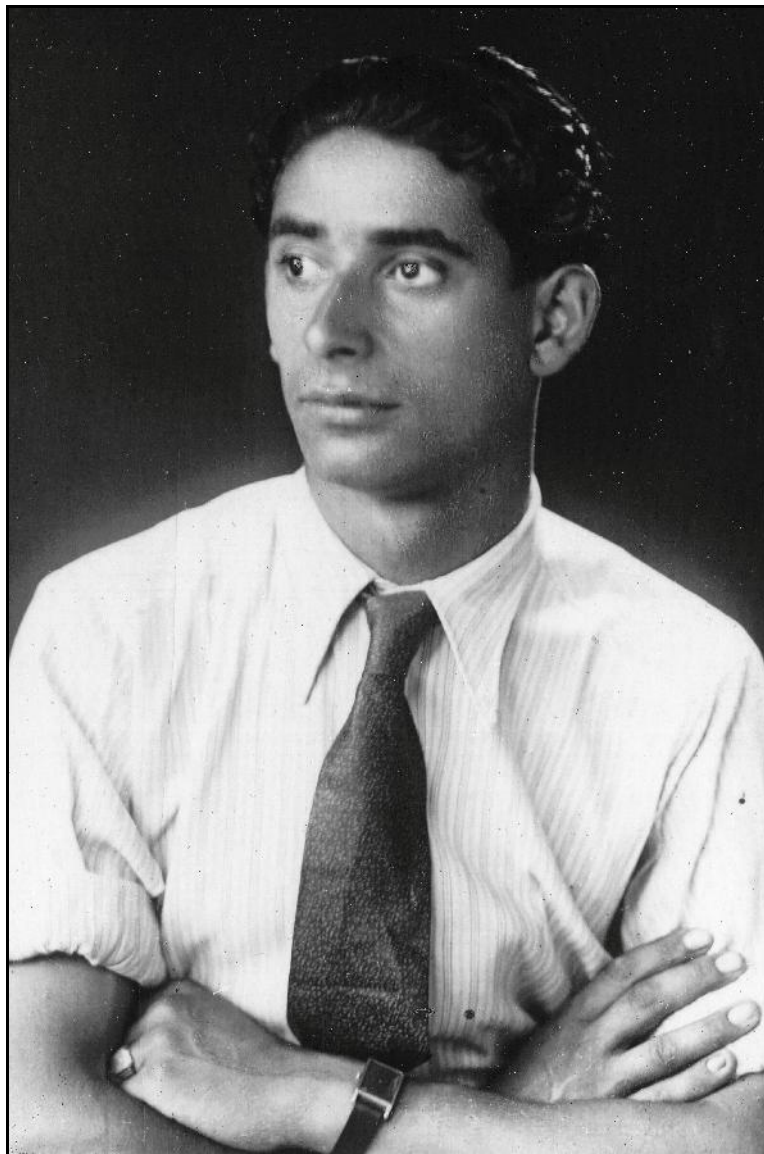


My Uncle Mark



My Uncle Mark

Barb Schwartz

February 2014

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PREFACE

This is Mark Kramer's story, as he described it in conversations over several years. In 1990, I went to Los Angeles to visit my Uncle Mark and to talk with him about his personal history, particularly during the Holocaust. He was willing to talk with me about that awful time in his life. I felt it was important to have a record of all that he went through. A transcript of our conversations, which Mark permitted me to tape record, is attached as [Appendix 1](#).

In 1993 Stephen Spielberg released *Schindler's List*. As an outgrowth of the film, the Shoah Foundation began compiling video histories of Holocaust survivors. An interviewer and camera man visited Mark in his home on May 11, 1998, to film his story. The Shoah Foundation tapes are housed permanently at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, California.

In December 1998, my Aunt Minnie Kramer wrote an article, "I Married a Holocaust Survivor." [Appendix 2](#). In April 2012, my son Matt and I went to Los Angeles to see my aunt and uncle. During the first afternoon of our visit, Mark spoke to Matt about coming to the United States. Then he spoke of his experiences during the war, some of which he had not mentioned on the tape I made or on the Shoah Foundation video.

In May 2013, I went to Los Angeles to celebrate the 68th anniversary of Mark's liberation on May 6, 1945. During that visit, Mark answered additional questions which I had.

In addition to Mark's recollections, for this history I have relied on photos and documents Mark and Minnie provided, and on additional materials found on the internet or in several books.

I hope this will serve in small part, to honor a wonderful man to whom I have always felt a strong connection and special love.

All my love,

Your "Favorite" and Only Niece



RADOMYSL WIELKI

Early Recollections

Mark Kramer was born in Radomysl Wielki, Poland on February 8, 1924. His parents were Israel and Dina (nee Solomon) Kramer. They lived in a large house, with his three sisters, Dvora, Esther and Tillie. The house was divided down the middle



Dina, Tillie and
Mark, in 1931

Photo Courtesy of
Rosa Rosenberg

by a long hallway. His mother's sister and her family lived on one side and Mark's family on the other. Mark had many aunts, uncles and cousins living in surrounding towns, including Tarnov, Dębica and Krakow.

Mark's father and uncles were tradesmen. His father sold fish in the town market, which he bought from a farmer with a lake filled with fish. Mark remembered going with his father to that farm, to buy fish. One uncle made pots and pans, which he sold at the town market. Mark remembered as a young boy sitting and watching his uncle making them. Another uncle in Radomysl Wielki was in the construction business, and an uncle in Dębica sold meat.

There were three synagogues in Radomysl Wielki. Mark's family attended the largest of them. All three, Mark recalled, were Orthodox and the other two were more Orthodox than his family's. His father went to synagogue every day, and the whole family went on Saturdays and holidays. Mark was Bar Mitzvah'd there at the age of thirteen.

Mark commented that his favorite holiday was Passover. He remembered all the special "goodies" that his mother and grandmother made. Although he has no real memories of his grandparents, he did remember fondly the blueberry sweets his grandmother baked for Passover.

Mark went to a Polish public school, and once a week to a Hebrew school. When he was older, he went to an Orthodox school every day in the late afternoon. For fun, he played soccer with his friends. They did not have a soccer ball; they played with one made of rags. His friends included both Jews and non-Jews.

The Nazi Invasion

Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. About eight days later German Wehrmacht soldiers entered Radomysl Wielki.¹ The town had about 4,200 people, of whom 2,500 were Jews.²

Mark recalled that the German Army soldiers (Wehrmacht) were not cruel to the Jews. To the contrary, two soldiers came almost every night to see his sisters and to talk with his father. During World War I, Israel Kramer fought in the Austrian Army and was a decorated soldier. Until after World War I, the town of Radomysl Wielki was part of Austria, not Poland. The Wehrmacht soldiers brought chocolates and cigarettes when they visited. They would have been in trouble with their

¹ Another survivor's account is in accord. Rafael Alony wrote, "On a Friday, September 8th, 1939 remnants of the Polish army left Radomysl hastily and disorderly; the way a beaten army retreats. Here and there some shots tore the air. The Jewish population was shut up behind bolted doors, the stores all closed up. The town was like a graveyard. A quiet Polish (Jewish) sergeant drove out people still in the streets telling them that the Nazi enemy will enter town any minute. I shall never forget the moment when the first German patrol appeared riding on motor-cycles." <http://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/Radomysl/Rad005.html#What> (last visited 12/27-2013).

A different account stated that the Germans arrived on September 7, 1939. http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/pinkas_poland/pol3_00338.html (last visited 12/27-2013).

² Jan Ziobron, "The History of the Jewish Commune in Radomysl Wielki" (1991). <http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kolbuszowa/radomysl%20wielki/radomysl5.html> (last visited 12/27-2013). A different source put the pre-Holocaust Jewish population at 1,422. <http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/kolbuszowa/radomysl%20wielki/radomysl1.html> (last visited 12/27-2013)

superiors if found out, so Mark would watch the streets when they arrived and left so they would not be seen. This went on for several weeks, until the SS arrived and everything changed.

At first Mark and other boys and men were taken out every day, as laborers. Some of the work was pointless. They would move large mounds of dirt from one spot to another. When they were done, they would move it back.³ The SS also took them into the nearby forest to cut trees.

One day, in early 1940 as Mark recalled,⁴ an announcement was made that all Jews in town had two hours to pack anything they could carry and report to the town square. Mark remembered his mother taking a large white sheet and filling it with clothes and food. They gave family valuables to a non-Jewish neighbor who promised to keep them safe. At one point, Mark asked to hide in that family's barn, but the neighbor was too afraid of the SS to agree. Mark didn't blame them because anyone hiding Jews was shot. The family's valuables were never seen again.

³ Haja Garen-Rozenblat, another survivor from Radomysl described one such incident: "Suddenly an order was issued to sweep the square. Having swept once, they were made to do it again. Finally, after the garbage was neatly piled up in one place, they were ordered to scatter it and start anew. All that time they were screamed at and beaten cruelly."
<http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/radomysl/Rad004.html>

⁴ Ziobron stated that the first deportation was on April 17, 1940. Two hundred fifty people were sent to "Pustkow near Dębica," followed by another five hundred. Note 2.

As they walked to the square, non-Jewish townspeople lined the road and struck them with chains and metal rods. In the square were two lines of wagons. Mark noticed that elderly Jews were sent to wagons on the left. He pulled his family to the wagons on the right. The wagons on the left side departed in the direction of the town cemetery, which was about two kilometers away. Mark heard gunfire coming from that direction and learned later that they were all shot.

“Herding” and separating people into groups was not done by the SS, but by a group of people Mark called “*katavita*” (phonetic spelling). Mark described them as half Polish, half German and very cruel.⁵

Additional information on the history of Radomysil Wiekł, and additional accounts of the Nazi arrival in September 1939, may be found at [Appendix 3](#).

⁵ “‘Volksdeutsche’ were Poles of German descent who were given the option of becoming German citizens. On their arm they wore red bands with a black swastika. The Volksdeutsche were participants in the *Aktions* against Polish Jews.” Jacob Flaws, “Bystanders, blackmailers, and perpetrators: Polish complicity during the Holocaust,” (2011), at 63, Iowa State U. Online depository: <http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/etd/11917/> (last visited 12-27-2013). *See also*, Kimberly C. Partee, “Ukrainian Collaboration on Trial and the Trawniki Men Delivering Justice and Writing History,” (Draft, 2011), http://www.ukrainianstudies.uottawa.ca/pdf/P_Danyliw_2011_Partee.pdf (last visited 12-27-2013).

DEBICA - RZESZOW

The wagons took them to Debica. They sat in the town square (or field) for a long time. They spent the night there. The guards poked them with their rifles and “stand on peoples’ heads” so they couldn’t sleep. Mark said that the very orthodox men were forced to dance while being terrorized by guards and their barking dogs.

Around the square were small and large trucks. Suddenly the Nazis pulled all the young boys and men away from their families, and put them into trucks. Mark remembered crying and trying to stay with his crying parents. He was put in one of the small trucks. He saw very young children being thrown into some of the large trucks. He saw babies put into potato sacks and thrown into the large trucks. “Too old or too young -- they were killed right away.” That was the last time Mark saw his parents and sisters.

His truck arrived in Rzeszow, about 150 km east of Krakow. By 1941 the city was renamed Reichshof. It was known to its Jewish population as “Reishe.” By the end of 1939 Germany had established ten forced labor camps in the Rzeszow region.⁶ Mark was in a camp which supplied slave labor for a factory complex producing

⁶ Holocaust Education & Archive Research Team, <http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/ghettos/rzeszow.html> (last visited 12-27-2013).

aircraft engines.⁷ Prisoners lived in large barracks with hundreds of people. They were guarded by Ukrainians,⁸ whom Mark said were crueler than the SS. Prisoners were warned that if anyone tried to escape, three people on either side of his bed would be shot. They were taken to showers and given back their dirty clothes.

Mark's first job was to make large screws for plane engines. He was taught how to make them by Polish and German civilian engineers. Prisoners were treated

⁷ "Some of the camps were basically detention centers housing workers for adjacent factories, like the Flug Motoren Vork Reichshof and Daimler-Benz airplane engine works at Rzeszow. This factory, shared by the two companies, typically utilized 600 local Jews, mostly as janitors and manual laborers, and some with technical skills worked as watchmakers, electricians and repairmen. Jewish workers there were housed in a barracks behind barbed wire, but had better food and hygiene conditions compared to most of the other camps; they received cold showers every day, so lice was less of a problem than at other Arbeitslager (forced labor camps)." <http://www.zolynia.org/occupation.html> (last visited 12-27-2013).

"On 9 September 1939, the pre-war buildings of a factory complex south of the centre of Rzeszow were seized by the Germans. The factory was divided between the Flugmotorenwerke Reichshof GmbH . . . and the Daimler-Benz AG (which used some buildings for the maintenance of aviation engines for the East Front). In 1941 both companies employed approximately 2,000 people, among them more than 600 Jews with considerable technical experience who were housed in a prisoners camp which was integrated into the overall factory grounds but outside the wall which enclosed the complex." <http://www.deathcamps.org/occupation/rzeszowfactory.html> (last visited 12-27-2013).

In the Holocaust Victims Assets Litigation (Swiss Banks), the Special Master wrote in 2000, at page H-49, "In late 1941, Daimler-Benz established a facility in Rzeszow, Poland for the production of aircraft engines; Jews were used as slave labors there beginning in the summer of 1942. The Jewish work force reached 500 in November 1942." http://www.swissbankclaims.com/PDFs_Eng/697499.pdf (last visited 1-27-2013).

⁸ "SS and police officials inducted, processed, and trained 2,500 auxiliary police guards (*Wachmänner*, also known as Trawniki men) at Trawniki training camp between September 1941 and September 1942. . . . The *Wachmänner* also guarded forced-labor camps for Jews . . ." United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. "The Holocaust." Holocaust Encyclopedia. <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007397> (last visited 12-27-2013).

well by the engineers. Mark's next job was to sharpen knives. He had no eye protection and had to be very careful of the hot shards. Later he worked on airplane engines.

Each prisoner had a cup, which he had to carry with him at all times. In the evening, each was given one slice of bread and a cup of coffee.⁹ The bread slice was one-twelfth of a loaf. The ends were slightly bigger, so Mark would try to position himself in line to try to get an end slice. They were supposed to keep some of the bread for breakfast, but everyone ate it all in the evening. If they tried to save it, it would usually disappear. In the morning they were given a cup of black coffee.¹⁰ Midday they were given a cup of soup which was just a watery liquid.

One night Mark fell asleep at work. He was discovered by a one-armed SS guard. (Mark remembered he was missing his left arm). He beat Mark so badly that he was careful never to fall asleep while working again. He was at Rzeszow for about six to eight months (per Shoah tape) or nine to eleven months (per my tape). Additional information on Rzeszow may be found at [Appendix 4](#).

⁹ Mark's description is very similar to that of George L. Salton, author of "The 23rd Psalm: A Holocaust Memoir" (2002), who was at the airplane factory, but likely after Mark left. He referred to the "putrid substitute coffee," the "bowl of watery cabbage or turnip soup and a small chunk of coarse bread. . ." See also, the article cited in the second paragraph of footnote 7.

¹⁰ "Coffee" was *ersatzkaffee*, an inferior *getreidekaffee* or "grain coffee." Little real coffee reached Germany during the war. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ersatz_good (last visited 12-27-2013).

PLAZSOW

Mark's prisoner group was readied to be sent to Plazsow, outside of Krakow, as soon as barracks were built for them.¹¹ Mark later learned that the prisoners who built their barracks were shot after the barracks were finished.

Jews arrived at Plazsow by train, in boxcars. When trains arrived, Mark recalled, a group of Jewish musicians played for them, to calm them down.¹² Newly arrived prisoners were separated into groups. The Jews not selected to work were lined up in front a long trench and machine gunned. Mark and five others were

¹¹ I found differing views of when the Plazsow prison camp opened. Some sources, including the USHMM, said it was "established in 1942 . . . [as] a forced labor camp for Jews . . .," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. "The Holocaust." Holocaust Encyclopedia. <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005301> (last visited 12-27-2013). During 1942, Jewish slave laborers from Krakow went daily to the camp, to build it, and "and from January 1943 many no longer returned to the ghetto, but stayed in the unfinished camp barracks." <http://www.inyourpocket.com/poland/krakow/sightseeing/Plaszow> (last visited 12-27-2013). "A group named *Barrackenbau* [Barracks construction] was created after 28 October 1942 . . ." <http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/othercamps/plaszow/plaszow.html> (last visited 12-27-2013).

Another organization, the Holocaust Education & Archive Research Team, reported that construction occurred earlier. "The construction of the camp began in summer 1940. Its first prisoners were Poles. In 1941 the camp was extended and the first Jews were deported there." <http://www.deathcamps.org/occupation/plaszow.html> (last visited 12-27-2013).

¹² In 1944, Plazsow was designated as a concentration camp, rather than a forced labor camp. See, USHMM article in note 11. Trains of Hungarian Jews arrived during that year. <http://www.deathcamps.org/occupation/plaszow.html> (last visited 12-27-2013). Others arrived from arrived from "the eastern region of Malopolska, [and] Slovakia . . ." <http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/othercamps/plaszow/plaszow.html> (last visited 12-27-2013).

assigned to strip the bodies, collect their valuables, including their gold teeth, and stack the bodies in rows in the trench. “Head to foot,” recalled Mark. There was a 60 year-old German who oversaw their work, with a dog on a leash. “Head to foot, he told us, that son of a bitch.”

One day another prisoner told Mark that there was another man named Kramer in another barrack. He went to find him and discovered it was his first cousin Sam, who had lived in Krakow. Sam was a year younger than Mark. From that day until they were liberated in 1945, Mark and Sam went from camp to camp together.

Plaszow was the location of a Jewish cemetery for Krakow.¹³ The SS commander of Plaszow was Amon Goeth,¹⁴ an unusually cruel man, even among the SS. His cruelty vividly was depicted in Spielberg’s movie *Schindler’s List*. Goeth was tried by the Polish government for his crimes and hung in 1946.¹⁵

¹³ “The site chosen compromised two Jewish cemeteries: the new Jewish cemetery on Abraham Street, and the old Jewish cemetery on Jerozolimska Street. This area also included Jewish community property, and private Polish dwellings whose owners had been evicted. From time to time the camp was enlarged, its maximum size in 1944 being 81 ha (200 acres).” <http://www.deathcamps.org/occupation/plaszow.html> (last visited 12-27-2013).

¹⁴ Amon Goeth arrived at Plaszow in February 1943. <http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/othercamps/plaszow/plaszow.html> (last visited 12-27-2013). Additional information about him may be found in [Appendix 5](#).

¹⁵ Goeth was arrested by the Nazis in late 1944, for embezzlement. The war ended before he was tried. In February 1945, he was arrested by American troops and handed over to the Polish government. He was convicted of crimes against Jews, and hung in September 1946. <http://www.deathcamps.info/Leyson/Goeth.htm> (last visited 12-27-2013).



Amon Goeth
Yad Vashem photo collection

Goeth ordered prisoners to dig up the cemetery. He wanted the headstones used to make a path to his house on the compound.¹⁶ Mark worked on this as well as digging up bodies and removing their gold teeth. There was a SS guard, about 18 years old, who watched them with a German Shepard. He collected any gold they found. Prisoners put the corpses in hand trucks and took them to a pit to be dumped.

Goeth was not among the Nazis tried at Nuremburg by the Allies and the United States, and because his crimes were not technically “war crimes,” he was not among those tried in the U.S. military court at Dachau. For a discussion of the jurisdictional limitations on trial of those responsible for the camps, *see*, Tomaz Jardim, *The Mauthausen Trial* (2012).

¹⁶ “The headstones from the graves were removed and used as paving in front of the offices and residences belonging to German officers. Bodies uncovered during the destruction of the cemetery were removed and thrown into mass graves. Most of the work had to be performed very quickly; prisoners ran, whilst the SS shouted, screamed orders, and threatened to shoot them.” www.holocaustresearchproject.org/othercamps/plaszow/plaszow.html (last visited 12-27-2013).

This project took weeks. Mark was the youngest man working on this detail. Mark was about 16 years old and one of the youngest in the camp. After a group of prisoners worked at their awful task for a while, they were taken out of camp to be shot. Mark and Sam avoided that fate because one of the camp “kapos,” Duvick, took a liking to them. Each time their group was to be eliminated, he switched them to a different group.

Kapos, whom Mark also referred to as “*odares*,” were prisoners who supervised other prisoners, in exchange for better food, housing and other considerations.¹⁷ Most of the kapos were hated by the prisoners because they often informed on prisoners to the SS.

After the cemetery was destroyed, Mark worked for the sanitation department. The food was just a bit better, but still consisted of coffee, soup and bread. Mark recalled that he still had his shoes at this time. His job was to clean the barracks. The German officers had what Mark called a whorehouse. They would bring prostitutes there for a few weeks and then kill them. Mark also had to clean those places.

¹⁷ “A kapo or prisoner functionary (German: *Funktionshäftling*) was a prisoner in a Nazi concentration camp who was assigned by the SS guards to supervise forced labor or carry out administrative tasks in the camp. . . . The SS used domination and terror to control the large camp populations with just a few SS guards. The system of prisoner functionaries was a ‘key instrument of domination’ in the concentration camps and was commonly called ‘prisoner self-government’ in SS parlance.” [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kapo_\(concentration_camp\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kapo_(concentration_camp)) (last visited 12-27-2013).

One day all the prisoners were assembled in the square to watch the hanging of a man in his fifties and a young boy. They were hung because they were caught whistling a Russian song. Mark remembered being made to stand and watch to the very end. Mark said, "This was another lesson."

On a very hot day, Mark and a few others went into the barracks to get out of the heat. An SS officer found them. The officer stood outside and made them run out one by one. He used a whip on each one. Mark was next to last, and as he ran out the tip of the whip caught him in his eye. That surely would have been a death sentence for him but for kapo Duvick.

Duvik took him to the infirmary for the kapos. A Jewish doctor and two nurses took care of him. Mark remembered the doctor as Dr. Myroski. They covered his eye and gave him medicine for about six weeks. Whenever the SS came by for inspections, they would cover him with a blanket (he was very thin) and the two nurses would position themselves in front of the bed to hide him. Dr. Myroski saw him every day. In addition to other medicine, the doctor gave him injections of milk.¹⁸

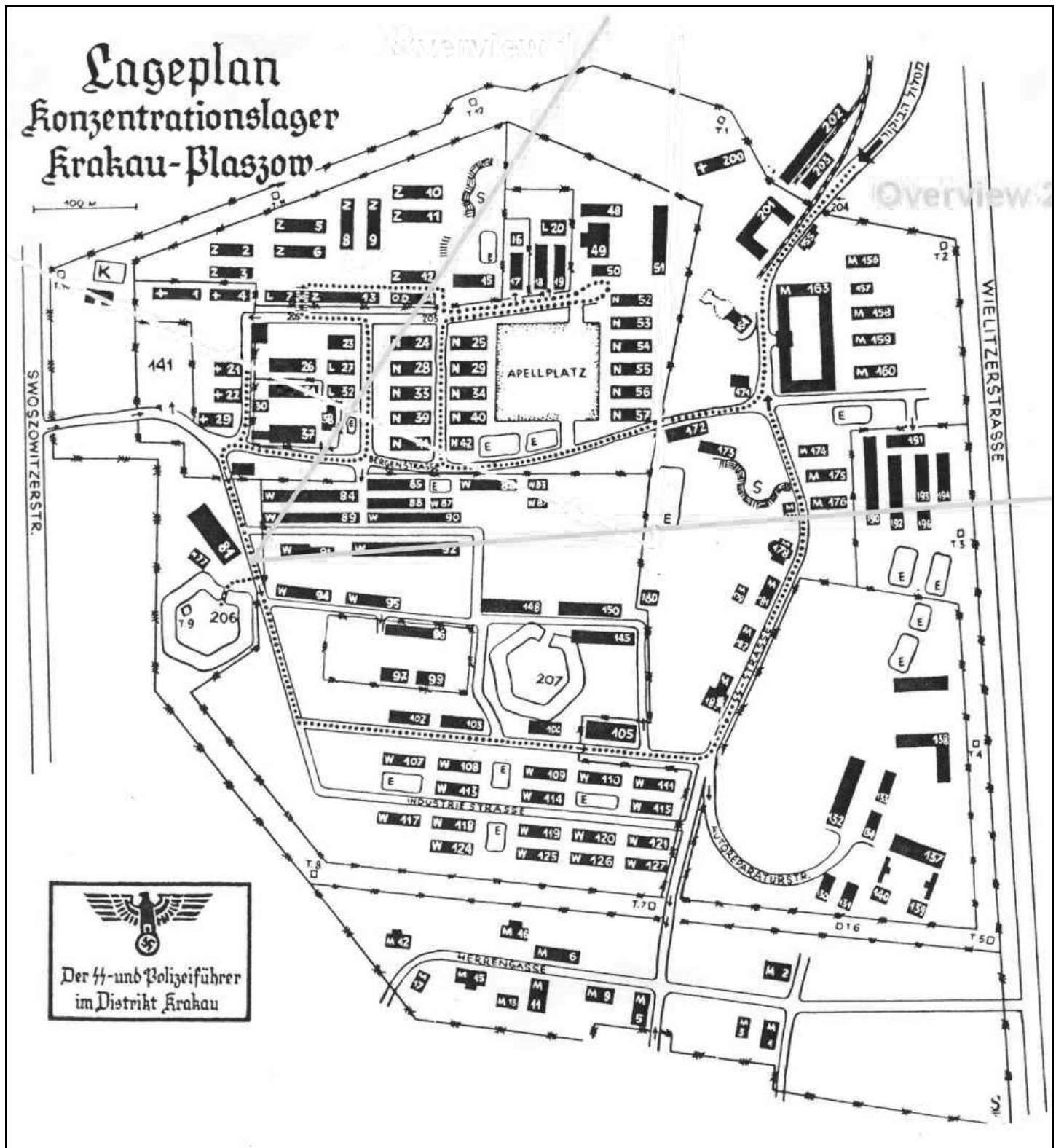
¹⁸ In 1924, the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, published an article titled, "The Active Agent in Milk Injections." The authors reported its use by ophthalmologists since 1915, and said, "... milk has been used in many thousands of cases by ophthalmologists, often with striking benefit. The literature is full of reports of good clinical results, and from personal experience we can heartily endorse the use of milk in certain kinds of ocular disease. There is no doubt of its efficacy in iritis, iridocyclitis and gonorrheal conjunctivitis, and as a prophylactic in

Finally, Mark had to go back to the barracks. The doctor wanted him to wear a patch over the injured eye, but Mark couldn't do that because he would have been singled out and killed. He forced himself to learn how to walk and balance with sight in just one eye. His loss of sight in that eye was permanent.

Some of the prisoners at Plaszow were taken in groups to work in nearby Krakow. They were counted as they left and as they returned. The number had to be the same. If anyone died, the dead body had to be carried back. Some of the local people secretly gave them some food, which they would hide in their clothes. One day, as a group was returning, the food was discovered. Mark was in his barrack at this point and watched through a window (no glass) as the entire group of about eighty people was taken to a hill above a pit. A group of Ukranian guards (whom Mark described as the cruelest), shot them all. As they fell into the pit, some managed to survive by hiding under other dead bodies.

Additional information about Plaszow may be found at [Appendix 6](#).

infections of the eyeball following perforating.” <http://jama.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=237945> (last visited 12-27-2013).



Map source: <http://www.deathcamps.org/occupation/plaszow.html> (Last visited 12-27-2013.

Z.....Women's Barracks	Madritsch.....127,126,125,111,115,121
N.....Men's Barracks	Officers Villas.....177,181,179,182,183
W.....Workshops	Tailors.....117,118,124,107,108,113
M.....Houses for Germans	Central Store.....85,88,105
2 +.....Hospitals	Hospital.....20,21,22
L.....Latrines	(Wachkaserne)
K.....Crematorium	(Leichenhalle)
E.....Pools	(Graues Haus)
T.....Watch Towers	(Verwaltung)
S.....Quarries	(Kommandantur)
Epidemic Hospital.....1,4	Rabbits.....139
Quarantine.....18,19	Chicken Run.....140
Jewish Police.....14	Latrine for Quarantine....20
Central Latrine.....27,32	Laundry.....23
Food Storeroom.....31	Meat Storeroom.....30
Bakery.....38	Kitchen.....37
Bath House.....49	Clothing Store.....48
Brush Manufacturer.....95	Delicing Center.....50
Blacksmith.....84	Hairs for Brushes.....77
Cobbler.....82	Watchmaker.....83
Electrician.....87	Potato Store.....81
Paper Utilisation.....90	Carpentry.....91,94
Printing Shop.....92	Dog Kennels.....180
Barracks for Watchman.....163	The Red House.....176
Morgue.....164	Main Gate.....294
Telephone Exchange.....155	Hujowa Gorka.....206
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Administration.....172	Chemical Laboratory ..130,131
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Commander 201	Mass Grave.....207
Railway Station.....202,203	Fumakers.....114,119
Women's Camp Gate.....205	Pig Sty.....137
Bookstores.....133,134	

MAUTHAUSEN - MELK

Mark and Sam were among a group of prisoners moved from Plaszow to Mauthausen in 1944.¹⁹ Just before Mark left by truck for Mauthausen, the SS shot all the kapos. As the trucks left, they passed their dead bodies. Mark didn't see Duvik's body, and hoped that he had been in Krakow and avoided execution. Duvik sometimes was given the privilege of going into Krakow by horse. Years later Mark found out that Duvik was killed that day.

Mauthausen was about twenty kilometers from Linz, Austria, and deep in the woods. Until he arrived there, Mark was able to retain pictures of his family. At Mauthausen, the prisoners were stripped of all their clothes and possessions, no matter how small. Each was given a towel and a thin blanket. The towel had to be returned after they were allowed to shower. They had no barracks assignments, and were forced to spend a week outdoors, sleeping on concrete. They were not given

¹⁹ "Before May 1944, the SS incarcerated relatively few Jews at Mauthausen. The total number of Jewish prisoners at Mauthausen between 1938 and the end of February 1944 was around 2,760. Most of them were reported dead by the end of 1943. From March through December 1944, at least 13,826 Jews arrived in Mauthausen, most of them Hungarian and Polish Jews and approximately 500 of them women." United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. "The Holocaust." Holocaust Encyclopedia.
<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007728>(last visited 12-27-2013).

"On 10 August 1944 a transport of 4589 Jewish prisoners came [to Mauthausen] from the Plaszow Labour camp near Krakow." <http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/othercamps/mauthausen.html> (last visited 12-27-2013).

clothes; all each man had was his thin blanket. At one point Mark used a dead body for a pillow. People died from exposure and starvation.



Newly arrived prisoners in Mauthausen courtyard, July 1941. <http://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa12303> (last visited 12-27-2013).

Finally, they were shaved, given striped uniforms and a metal bracelet with a number on it. Mark's number was 85215. Every day they were stripped and sent to the showers. They never knew whether it would be water or gas. He no longer had his shoes; all prisoners were given wooden shoes.²⁰

²⁰ April Voytko Kempler, *The Altered I: Memoir of Holocaust Survivor Joseph Kempler* (2013), contains a description from another survivor. "The shoes were flat, with a wooden base and scratchy canvas top that came up to the ankle. The canvas was attached to the wooden base with nails hammered around the edge. There was no difference in size, nor was there a left shoe or right shoe."

From Mauthausen, Mark and Sam were sent to Melk, Austria, one of three sub camps of Mauthausen.²¹ They were herded into train cars, for a trip which lasted about a week. They never were let out of the cars and had one bucket for a toilet. They were given no food and only occasionally given water.



USHMM photo of Melk camp

<http://digitalassets.ushmm.org/photoarchives/detail.aspx?id=1035677&search=&index=1> (last visited 12-27-2013).

²¹ “As the Allied air raids on the armaments production centres increased, the Armaments Ministry under Albert Speer and the armaments industry decided to transfer production underground. . . . Work started under the code name "Project Quartz" in March 1944. At the same time, a satellite camp of Mauthausen was established in Freiherr von Birago military barracks in Melk. On 21 April 1944 the first 500 inmates arrived from the main camp around 70 kilometres away.” http://en.mauthausen-memorial.at/db/admin/de/index_main.php?aufl=1&pgCPage=10&stext=&sort=&sortdir=&status=&search=&char=&article=258&fromlist= (last visited 12-27-2013).

At Melk, the food was the same as in the other camps; coffee, watery soup and a slice of bread. Every morning they marched five abreast, arm-in-arm to the town's train station. Mark commented that the local townspeople saw them every day, so there was no way they did not know about the camp. The train took them far into the mountains where they dug tunnels for armaments storage and factories.²² Mark said he used a steam hammer. Wood was used to shore up the walls before concrete was poured. Many prisoners died while working there and the living had to carry back the bodies of the dead to the train and back to the camp. Mark lost his wooden shoes and he walked in the snow with his feet covered only in rags. Then he lost the rags.

²² "Steyr-Daimler-Puch AG had a roller bearing plant in Steyr-Münichholz, which was to be transferred to an underground facility in Melk to protect it from air raids. Work started under the code name "Project Quartz" in March 1944. At the same time, a satellite camp of Mauthausen was established in *Freiherr von Birago* military barracks in Melk. On 21 April 1944 the first 500 inmates arrived from the main camp around 70 kilometres away. They were accommodated in 18 housing blocks and employed in the tunnelling [sic] work. The inmates were divided into work com-mandos led by SS men and supervised by civilian workers and kapos. The tunnelling [sic] site in Roggendorf was around four and a half kilometres from the camp in Melk. Every day after morning roll call the inmates were driven into goods [sic] and transported by train to the site. They worked three shifts of eight hours. In December 1944 production started in the new roller bearing plant (code name "Erle") in the completed tunnels. By 15 March 1945 a production area of 7,880 m² had been completed. By the time the tunnelling [sic]work was discontinued, two thirds of the planned tunnels had been dug and one third lined with concrete. . . . Of the 15,000 inmates interned in Melk, almost 5,000 died either as a result of the inhuman working conditions, absence of safety provisions in the tunnels, inadequate food, mistreatment or deliberate killing. The death rate in Melk peaked at the end of 1944 and beginning of 1945. More than 1,000 inmates died in January 1945 alone. Between 11 and 15 April 1945 the inmates were evacuated from Melk to Ebensee, with the sick being sent to Mauthausen." *Id.*

One day, his feet were freezing and he was crying. Sam told him to stand on his feet to keep them off the snow. Mark said to Sam that when he returned to the camp he would tell them he was sent out without shoes. Someone overheard him and reported them, for extra food. When they got back to camp, both Mark and Sam were called out by their numbers (no names were used, just their bracelet numbers). They were made to stand at attention. A guard came over and began beating them. They had some teeth knocked out. They were beaten so badly that they had to crawl back to their barracks. Mark said he hurt so badly that he couldn't lie down in his bunk for days.

Melk was a concentration camp with a gas chamber and a crematorium. The gas chamber was not used while Mark was there, but the crematorium was.²³ At some point when they were at Melk, Sam volunteered to clean out the ovens, so he could get extra food rations which he shared with Mark. Additional information on Mauthausen and Melk may be found at [Appendix 7](#) and [Appendix 8](#), respectively.

²³ “The average number of prisoners in Melk was about 8.000, so it scarcely needed a gas chamber and crematorium of its own. The reason for the building was that there were plans to eventually turn Melk into an advanced extermination camp. In the summer months the crematorium accounted for eight to sixteen deaths per day, while in the winter of 1944-45, the number increased to between 20-30 a day.” <http://www.jewishgen.org/forgottenCamps/Camps/MelkEng.html> (last visited 12-27-2013).

On a 2003 vacation trip, I visited the town of Melk. I went to the site of the camp, which remains an army base. The gate was closed, but I took photos of the memorial immediately behind the gate. Farther away, the chimney of the crematorium still stood. An acquaintance translated the words on the memorial:



The building on this property was at the time of the Second World War. It is the crematorium of the prison camp Meldesemaligen, a K-Z camp of Mauthausen. Thousands lost their life in this crematorium by burning to death. This memorial is also for the camp prisoners who lost their life building a war arsenal.

One day, the Germans heard that the Russian army was approaching, and they blew up the tunnels which the prisoners had just finished. There were no trains available, so the prisoners were herded in the hold of a large cargo ship. There were thousands of prisoners. They were given water and sometimes a piece of bread. The Germans didn't know what to do with them. The ship traveled up the Danube to Linz. This took about a week. They were taken off the ship and force marched to another sub-camp, called Ebensee, also in Austria.²⁴ Mark had lost his shoes again and was barefooted. They walked along highways. Along the way they stopped to repair railroad tracks damaged by Allied bombing. They were not getting any food, so Mark ate grass. It gave him diarrhea and some of the other prisoners told him to eat "black

²⁴ Other Melk survivors recalled the events similarly. "On our evacuation from Melk sometime in March 1945, we were marched to the Danube, where we were loaded on waiting barges and shipped upstream to Linz, whence we marched (really a slow walk or shuffle) to KZ Ebensee, by way of Gmunden on the Traunsee. At Linz we were each given two loaves of ersatz bread, and that was all the food we had for the next three to four days. No liquids were ever provided us and we slept in the woods alongside the road when dusk arrived." *New York Times*, February 16, 1986 letter to the editor from Max R. Garcia. <http://www.nytimes.com/1986/02/16/travel/l-melk-156286.html?pagewanted=print> (last visted 12-27-2013).

Seymour Mayer wrote *And then the Nazis Came* (2010). He described a similar barge trip and forced march from Melk to Ebensee, which began on the first Friday in April 1945. Two more groups came after his.

wood” (charcoal) from the railroad tracks. He did and it helped. Occasionally he would find a potato and eat it, skin, dirt and all. The march lasted about five or six days and many died along the way. Eventually they reached Ebensee.

EBENSEE

The Ebensee camp was located outside of the city, deep in a forest.²⁵ It was three or four levels below ground.²⁶ Some prisoners were ready to give up and walked into the electrified fence, committing suicide. Ebensee, as Melk, was established as a slave labor camp to dig tunnels for the remnants of German industrial production. Additional information on Ebensee may be found at Appendices 9 through 14.

Mark and Sam were in Ebensee until American troops liberated the camp. On May 6, 1945, they heard Allied planes overhead. Mark said he could tell from the sound of the engines that they were not German planes. Mark could hardly walk at this time and used a stick as a cane. His legs were swollen and he weighed about sixty

²⁵ Ebensee was about 75 km southwest of Linz. It was established in November 1943, and liberated by American forces in May 1945. In that time, it is estimated that it claimed approximately 20,000 prisoners' lives. www.jewishgen.org/forgottenCamps/Camps/EbenseeEng.html (last visited 12-27-2013).

²⁶ "There were to be twelve factories, each 1,400 feet long and each linked to one connecting tunnel. The site was to be given the official code name 'Zement.'" <http://dachaukz.blogspot.com/2012/11/ebensee-mauthausen-sub-camp-part-1.html> (last visited 12-27-2013).

In Spring 1945, as Allied troops closed on all sides, the Nazis abandoned concentration camps and moved prisoners to others, farther from the front. Ebensee was one of the camps which received these prisoners. Although the camp itself was above ground, the unfinished tunnels were used to contain prisoners for whom there was no room above ground. *Id.* Wikipedia reported that above ground there were twenty-five barracks, each intended to hold one hundred prisoners, but "eventually held as many as 750 apiece." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ebensee_concentration_camp (last visited 12-27-2013).

pounds.²⁷ The SS guards knew Allied soldiers were coming and attempted to push as many prisoners as they could into caves to kill them.²⁸ They didn't want to leave any evidence. The guards feared for their own lives and little by little began running away. Among the prisoners was a group of Russians. They began attacking the guards.

American troops in Gen. Patton's Third Army liberated the camp on May 6, 1945.²⁹ It took troops several hours to find the entrance to the camp. Mark remembered that many of the GIs were "Jewish boys." My guess is that the Allies tried

²⁷ "The prisoners' food allocation at Ebensee was well below that of other camps outside the Mauthausen group. The official ration was 150 grams of bread and 0.75 of a litre of a soup which was often made from grass." <http://dachaukz.blogspot.com/2012/11/ebensee-mauthausen-sub-camp-part-1.html> (last visited 12-27-2013).

²⁸ "Shortly before the arrival of the American Troops, the Guards planned to kill all remaining prisoners. It was planned to fake an air-raid, guide the prisoners into tunnel 9 of Plant B and blow up the tunnel. Fortunately, the rumor became known in the camp and in an heroic effort, the camp prisoners refused to enter the tunnel." <http://dativ.at/ebensee/> (last visited 12-27-2013).

²⁹ There is conflicting information on when and by which U.S. Army unit Ebensee was liberated. Wikipedia reported "American troops of the US 80th Infantry Division arrived at the camp on May 6, 1945." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ebensee_concentration_camp (last visited 12-27-2013). Another source identified the same unit, but asserted that its troops arrived on May 4-5. www.scrapbookpages.com/Mauthausen/KZMauthausen/Subcamps/Ebensee01.html (last visited 12-27-2013). A third source said that the liberators were in the 11th Armored Division, and arrived on May 6. <http://ogerm.tripod.com/a4.html> (last visited 12-27-2013).

The Holocaust Museum has a 1989 interview of a GI who claimed to have been among those who found Ebensee. [Appendix 12](#). He did not give a date, but identified his unit as F Troop of the Third Cavalry, which was part of Patton's Third Army. The official U.S. Army history of the unit, has differing details but confirms that it found Ebensee on May 6, 1945. United States Army, "The 3rd Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (Mecz.) in World War II, 9 August 1944 to 9 May 1945" (1949). http://digicom.bpl.lib.me.us/ww_reg_his/58/ (last visited 12-27-2013). Another member of that unit spoke at Ebensee in 2005. His account squares with the Army's history. [Appendix 13](#).

to find soldiers who spoke Yiddish to help them communicate with the prisoners. They set up tables with food and water. Mark specifically remembered them serving macaroni and cheese. Unfortunately, this was the wrong thing for the systems of people who had been starved for so long. Many of the prisoners died of eating too much.³⁰ Luckily, Mark and Sam decided to eat only bread.

The Army troops moved all the prisoners to the SS barracks. They let them throw rocks at the German guards who had been captured.³¹ Mark remembered Eisenhower appearing at the camp.³²

Mark said to Sam, “Let’s walk a little bit, we’re free, we’re free.” They walked into the nearby town. The townspeople had disappeared, abandoning their homes.

³⁰ One of the Army medical doctors at Ebensee confirmed that U.S. Army field rations and field kitchen soups caused deaths, as Mark described. Richard MacDonald, *Inside the Gates* (2010), at 124. One of the soldiers who liberated the camp also described how soup made for the prisoners killed some of them. [Appendix 13](#).

³¹ At least one was stoned to death. [Appendix 12](#).

³² The 182nd Medical Group was ordered to Ebensee, to care for the prisoners. Attached to that unit was Staff Sgt. Charles M. Ansler. His 2006 obituary stated, “Eisenhower ordered the 182nd Medical Group to accompany him, Patton and Bradley into the first concentration camp in Ebensee, Austria and also Ourdruf, Germany.” http://ziemerfuneralhome.com/memsol.cgi?user_id=615977 (last visited 12-27-2-13). There are photos on the internet of Eisenhower at Ourdruf, but none at Ebensee. There is confirmation that Patton was at Ebensee. A member of his escort detail, blogged in 2012, “As part of Patton's escort, we all had to ignore it when he went behind a "barracks" and chucked his cookies from what he saw and smelled!!” <http://forums.military.com/eve/forums/a/tpc/f/5291911282/m/8600017682001/p/4> (last visited 12-27-2-13).

Mark and Sam wandered into several homes looking for more bread. Mark remembered valuables lying about, but they took only bread.

At one house there was a woman in her fifties or sixties and her daughter in her thirties. The mother invited them in, gave them medicine and let them sleep in her barn. They stayed with her for several weeks. She fed them bland food, little by little adding more so they could get used to it. Mark always remembered her and how she helped save them. Eventually they left her and the Allies sent Mark to Linz and Sam to a hospital. Sam had tuberculosis. Mark had no way to visit Sam. A year and a half later, Sam showed up in Linz looking for Mark.

LINZ - BINDERMICHL

The area around Linz, Austria became a major center for displaced persons and refugees. Three large facilities were established for Jewish displaced persons: in Ebelsberg, in Bindermichl and in Wegscheid.³³ In the first five years after the war ended, it is estimated that at least 150,000 Jewish displaced persons passed through this area.³⁴

Mark recalled that these were brand-new homes, four blocks long, with two levels plus a basement. I found some photos of Bindermichl housing on the internet.



<http://www.bindermichl.linzansichten.at/lager/5dpcamp2.htm>



<http://www.insitu-linz09.at/en/locations/39-locations-ramsauerstrasseuhlandstrasse.html>

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<http://www.insitu-linz09.at/en/locations/39-locations-ramsauerstrasseuhlandstrasse.html> (last visited 12/20/2013).

³⁴ “Music and the Holocaust,” <http://dpcamps.ort.org/camps/austria/linz> (Last visited 12/11/2013). The same source states, “‘Camp 64’ was opened in the end of 1946 as a result of protests of former concentration camps inmates in the Linz area who were up to then housed either in former concentration camps or in temporary barracks.” Its description of Camp 64’s housing matches Mark’s. Other sources state that the camp opened in 1945, as Mark recalled. See, note 33.

The housing was built during the war, for workers at the Herman Goering Industrial Center. Its Austrian occupants were evicted³⁵ by the U.S. Allied Commission for Austria Section.³⁶ Mark and several other men were housed in one of these homes and a woman came by to do the cooking for them.



³⁵ Tom Segev, *Simon Wiesenthal: the Life and Legends* (2010).

³⁶ “The U.S. Allied Commission for Austria (USACA) Section was responsible for civil affairs and military government administration in the American section (U.S. Zone) of occupied Austria . . .” National Archives and Records Administration, <http://www.archives.gov/research/microfilm/dn1929.pdf> (last visited 12/20/2013).

Mark borrowed a motorcycle, to see how fast he could go downhill. He crashed. "I was stupid."



The Bindermichl DP Camp was run by the Allies, but the DPs decided they needed their own police force as well. Mark volunteered for this police force. When Sam arrived in Bindermichl, after being released from the hospital, Mark convinced him to join as well. Mark told Sam he needed to have a job to be useful. In February 1948, Mark and Sam completed a formal Allied training course in Ebelsberg, Austria, after which Mark was promoted to sergeant. Copies of his certificate of course completion and his sergeant's credentials may be found as [Appendix 15](#).

Graduates were given both summer and winter uniforms. Mark had a brown uniform, high black boots, two belts (one across the waist and one across the chest), a cloth cap and leather gloves. Mark's uniform pants and boots can be seen in the photo on the left, and his jacket and hat in the photo on the right. Both photos were taken at memorial services in Bindermichl. (Mark was asked to wear a prisoner's striped shirt).



From 1946 to 1948, the chief of DP police was Willie Sterner, who later wrote *The Shadows Behind Me* (2010). He described his officers as “disciplined, dedicated and honest.” The DP police kept order in the camp. There was no violence but there was a lot of black market activity.³⁷ Mark was paid by both the U.S. and Austrian armies in U.S. dollars and Austrian shillings. He received 600 Austrian shillings a month. He did not recall what he was paid by the U.S. Army. He also was given clothes, food and sundries for free, and he gave his surplus to friends and neighbors. He was allowed to shop at the U.S. Post Exchange, which gave him access to items no other DPs could buy.

Mark had a very good relationship with the American MPs and the Austrian police, and was well respected by both. He even socialized with the Austrian police and their families and dated some of their daughters. The DP police only had night sticks and one gun for the whole station, which was kept locked up.

Some Jews were allowed to have businesses that offered services, as barber shops, but they could not sell goods. One group was caught butchering a cow it “found” in a nearby field, and Mark confiscated the beef. There was a popular ice-

³⁷ In his book, Sterner noted his policy of tolerating the black market. “As was true throughout much of Europe in the immediate post-war period, Bindermichl had a large organized black market, or underground economy. It was illegal, but I didn’t bother the black marketeers. What I wasn’t looking for, I didn’t know about. As far as I was concerned, the black market didn’t exist in Bindermichl.” The U.S. authorities felt differently, and at one point Sterner was “charged with tolerating the operation of the black market in my community.”

cream shop which also traded in black market U.S. dollars. One day Mark went in for some ice cream, and while he there, American MPs raided the shop. He had just been paid and had a large sum of Austrian shillings in his wallet. The MPs thought he was a black marketeer and arrested him. When he was brought before an American military supervisor, he explained the mistake and was released. Little did they know he had U.S. currency in the fingers of the gloves he had laid on the supervisor's desk while they talked. He never went back to that ice cream shop again.

In the evenings Mark often would go to a nightclub on the Russian / U.S. sector border. Austria, like Germany was divided into four occupation zones, (U.S., U.K., France and Russia) and remained under joint occupation until 1955.³⁸

³⁸ “Whereas Germany was divided into East and West Germany in 1949, Austria remained under joint occupation until 1955; its status became a controversial subject in the Cold War until the warming of relations known as the Khrushchev Thaw. After Austrian promises of perpetual neutrality, Austria was accorded full independence on 12 May 1955 and the last occupation troops left on 25 October that year.”

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allied-occupied_Austria (last visited 12/20/2013)



A party with friends



Sam and Mark



Years later in Brooklyn, Mark met the man in the middle.



The DP Camp police – Mark is second from the right. The Chief is in the middle.



Mark in his Summer
and Winter uniforms





Mark and Sam with two black marketeers



A funeral procession. Mark is at the front, left side.



The man with Mark was a black marketeer, who was chased by MPs. As he ran past Mark, he handed Mark U.S. dollars. He came back for them later, but neglected to say thanks.

Mark standing in front of the PX building





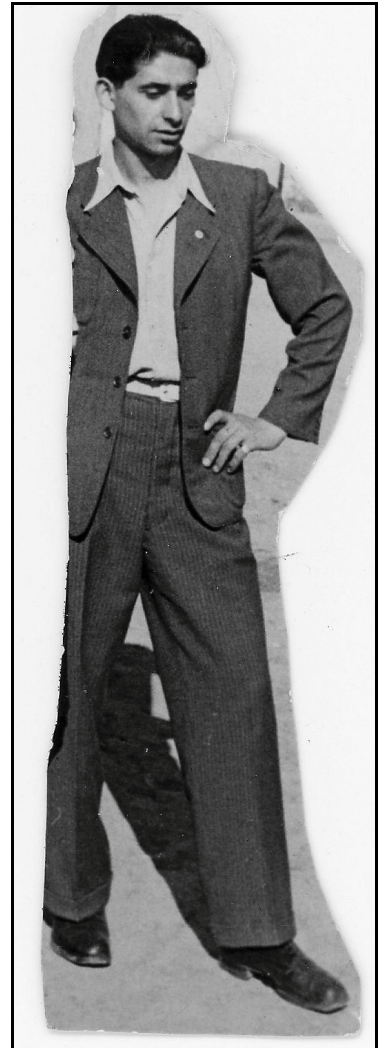
Mark and other members of the DP police force



DP police with American military and civil authorities



Two photos of Mark,
Taken about 1948



Sam and Mark tried to find any members of their families, who also survived the Nazis. They inquired through various organizations set up in Linz for that purpose, but found no one. They tried again after arrived in the United States, with the same result.

COMING TO AMERICA

Sam had an uncle in the United States, who inquired about any Kramers in Europe who survived the war. He got in touch with Sam and began to arrange for his emigration to the U.S. He found that Mark also had an uncle in the U.S., Sam Solomon, on his mother's side. Sam Solomon initially didn't get involved, but Sam Kramer's uncle convinced him to do so. He finally began the process for Mark to emigrate. It took two years before Mark and Sam were able to leave Austria for the United States.

Mark had an opportunity to emigrate to Canada or to Israel. He elected to wait for a U.S. visa. When it came, he and Sam traveled by train to Germany, and left on or about January 7, 1949, aboard the SS *Marine Flasher*.³⁹

³⁹ The SS *Marine Flasher* was built as a C4-type troopship in 1945, by Kaiser Co., Inc., in Vancouver, Washington. http://thekeessler.com/family/tibor/Marine_Flasher.html (last visited 1-4-2014). On December 19, 1946, President Truman issued an executive order concerning transportation of refugees to the United States. A copy may be found at [Appendix 16](#). It is known as "Truman's Directive" or "Truman's Quota." He ordered four ships to begin transporting refugees with previously-issued visas. Many visa holders had waited a year or more for passage. The four ships were the SS *Ernie Pyle*, SS *Marine Marlin*, SS *Marine Falcon*, and SS *Marine Flasher*.



Mark recalled that it was a very rough crossing, which was normal for the North Atlantic in January. Most of the passengers were seasick during the entire crossing. Mark remembered that it was the first time he ever saw a black man (one of the crew). They arrived in Boston on the evening of January 17, 1949. Their suitcases were filled with clothes, candy, cigarettes and shoes. Mark had two custom-made leather suitcases, one of which was filled only with shoes. After so many years without shoes in the camps, he really loved them. He said he had about twelve pairs of brand-new shoes, in various colors. The Customs Inspector at the Port of Boston thought he was planning to sell them on the black market. Mark convinced him they were all his, for his own use.

From Boston, Mark and Sam took a train to New York. Mark recalled how empty the train seemed. Mark's aunt and uncle, Sam and Lena Solomon, and his

cousins were waiting at the station for him, holding his photo. His uncle had two married daughters, Ruth and Gertrude. Sam was met by his uncle too.

NEW YORK

Mark recalled being awed by the lights of Manhattan. His uncle lived in Harlem, on 167th and Broadway, and operated a candy store on 163rd and Broadway. Mark worked there for several weeks.

One day a man passed by the store and spotted Mark. He walked up and said, “I know you from somewhere.” Mark told him, “Of course I know you.” The man was a member of the OSS/CIA, who worked in Linz, where they had met several times. The man asked Mark’s uncle if he could take Mark sightseeing for the day. It was the first time Mark rode on a subway. They went to a movie and then he took Mark back home.

Mark obtained a job at a Bronx ice cream factory, through his cousin Ruth’s husband, Sam. Mark ate so much ice cream, that after a few days he couldn’t look at it anymore. He quit that job because it was so cold working there.

Mark decided he needed to set out on his own. Although his aunt and uncle were sad to see him leave, he found an apartment in Brooklyn and went to work as a “floor boy” in the DuBois Factory, which made police and military uniforms.



Mark and Minnie both remembered that he began the job on May 1, 1949. The factory was in the Green Point section of Brooklyn. A floor boy was just a gofer. Mark wanted a better job, and so, when everyone was gone he taught himself to use a sewing machine. He was given a position as a piece worker, sewing pockets.

Minnie Simon had worked at the factory as a bookkeeper from 1945. Mark kept going to the office to see Minnie, saying that he had to sharpen pencils. He spoke very little English and she spoke no Yiddish. She did, however, understand Yiddish. They went out for lunch and then for dinner. Mark met her family and often rode the train home with her at the end of the day. According to Mark this usually led to a “free dinner.” Despite the language barrier they fell in love and became engaged in September 1949.

When they still were dating, Minnie and Mark were babysitting me. I was about a year old. Minnie had to change my diaper but didn’t know how. Mark stepped in and

changed my diaper. He loves telling me the story. They married on January 7, 1950.



On March 11, 1952, Mark became a United States citizen. [Appendix 17](#). Their son Stuart was born September 10, 1954. Their daughter Debra was born April 21, 1958. Stuart had a son Adam, who was born June 21, 1984. Adam married Stephanie in July 2007, and their son Micah was born May 29, 2010.

Sam Kramer married Rita in 1952 and settled in Brooklyn. Their daughter Sandi was born in 1955. Their son Barry was born in 1959. Their daughter Debbie was born in 1958. Debbie had two sons, Jacob and Nathan. Sam died February 2004. A simple family tree, drawn by Sandi Kramer, from information Aunt Minnie gave me in 2011 may be found as [Appendix 18](#).

One night after Mark and Minnie were married, they went to a dance in Brooklyn. A woman approached Mark. Mark recalled, “She fell on me crying.” She was Duvik’s (the kapo who saved Mark’s life at Plazsow) widow. After the war, she came to America and remarried.

In 1948, the United Restitution Organization (URO) “was established . . . as a legal aid service to assist victims of Nazi persecution living outside Germany in making restitution and indemnification claims against Germany and Austria.”⁴⁰ Mark filed a claim in 1952. He obtained affidavits from several Brooklyn men, who had been with

⁴⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Restitution_Organization (last visited 12-27-2013).

him in the camps. He received a formal confirmation letter from the German government in 1953 ([Appendix 19](#)) but did not receive any money until the late 1950's.

In 1953, Mark started working in a dry-cleaning store, and in 1959 he and a partner opened Park Cleaners in Brooklyn.

Minnie was the youngest of three sisters. Helen, the oldest was my mother. The middle sister was Nettie. Our family was very close and almost every Sunday we would visit my maternal grandparents (Minnie's mother and father). The extended family on their side included Minnie, and Mark, her sisters Helen and Nettie and their husbands, Murray and Leo, respectively, and all three daughters' children.

As I grew up, Mark and I became very close. Other than Minnie, I was the only person with whom he spoke about his experiences during the Holocaust. We have a very special relationship. Although I am his only niece, he delights in calling me his "favorite" niece.

Due to Mark's poor health, in 1973 the family moved to Los Angeles, to be in a warmer climate and a place where Mark and Minnie had friends.

My son Matt's Bar Mitzvah was on February 3, 1990. Mark was given an *aliyah* (an honor) to read a prayer at the ceremony. He became very emotional. Matt later asked me why and I explained about Mark's history and why family is so important to him. The following year, Matt wrote a school report on Mark's experiences in the

camps, using my recorded interview and documents. His report is included, as [Appendix 20](#), for the perspective of a 14-year-old, a year younger than Mark was when Germany invaded Poland. When Matt went to undergraduate school at U.S.C. in Los Angeles, he too developed a lasting and special connection with Mark.

Minnie became a travel agent, specializing in planning group travel for Holocaust survivor organizations. In May 1992, Mark and Minnie traveled to Israel. Minnie had located one of Mark's aunts, Mina, who survived the war. She had been married to one of Mark's uncles on his father's side. They went to visit her. She was quite old and confused about whom they were. She showed Mark and Minnie a photo of Mark and Sam as young boys and began to cry about how they died during the war. Mark and Minnie explained to her that Mark was one of the two boys in the photo, and that Sam also survived the war. She was overcome.

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TODAY

Mark and Minnie remain in Los Angeles. Stuart and his family, and Debbie live nearby. This family photo, showing four generations, is the legacy of a man who survived the horrors of the Holocaust and went on to touch the lives and hearts of all who know him.

Happy 90th birthday, Uncle Mark



TRANSCRIPT OF TAPE RECORDING

BARB SCHWARTZ INTERVIEWING MARK KRAMER

AUGUST 7 -8, 1990

This recording was made at the home of Mark and Minnie Kramer, 1016 North Orange Grove, Los Angeles, California.

Barb: Start all over again when you were born.

Mark: What should I do, hold this?

Barb: Yeah, make believe you are on television.

Mark: All right, I start first with my name.

Barb: O.K.

Mark: Yeah. I don't know.

Barb: It's on. This is very informal.

Mark: All right.

Barb: I'll talk to you while we are doing this, so.

Mark: Oh you're going.

Barb: When were you born? Yeah, I'll be in here too, we can both talk.

Mark: O.K. My name is Mark. I was born in Poland in 1924, February 8th.

Barb: What town?

Barb: Tell me about your family.

Mark: I had a family, three sisters, mother and father. I had a lot of uncles, aunts and cousins. We all spread out all over. We were in Radomysl, we were in Tarnow we were in Krakow They lived in Dembice, part of the family and a...

Barb: Well it seemed you were more relaxed before (laugh). I'll hold it (the microphone), make believe it's not here (laugh), let's just do it this way. Make believe it's not here.

Mark: When the war broke out....

Barb: Well, no go back, you were telling me what your dad did, what your uncles did.

Mark: This is not, this is important?

Barb: Yeah.

Mark: Well. We had a fish market. Very large fish market, and one of my uncles was in the, I forgot how you...

Barb: Meat market you said.

Mark: Meat market. This was in Dembice and uh, in Radomysl Wiellki we had another family, they were in the roofing business, O.K. be easier, the roofing business, you know, they do everything. O.K.. And I had a lot of cousins. We had family in Krakow, this Poland, this was from my father's side. We had from my mother's side and we're into the war now.

Barb: Tell me about the cavalry, though, the horses.

Mark: No but my sisters. I had three sisters, and myself and father and mother.

Minnie: Their names Mark.

Mark: The names, my father was Israel [Hebrew pronunciation], that's in English Israel. My mother's name was Dina. My older sister was Tilla. No. No, I'm sorry. My older sister was Dvora. And my younger sister was Tilla. And the middle sister was Debra. [ed. note: middle sister was Esther] Now we are going to when the Germans came in.

Barb: O.K.

Mark: They came in one week. When the war broke out, one week later they came into our city. Exactly on a Friday the war broke out. The following Friday the Germans came in. They start burning all four corners of the cemetery. And people start running in the fields. Whoever was running, the helicopters were very low and they just killed them. And I was standing by my house with my mother, holding on to her apron. And I wouldn't run.

Minnie: How old were you?

Mark: I was maybe 14 years old. [ed. note. He was 15]. And we were together for a while. And every day the Germans picked us out from the house. All the men and all the young guys to go to work. We went to the forest. We cut around trees. All kind of work. All kind of labor. And then after work they took us back home to our homes. This was going on for a while till the SS came in.

Barb: Oh, but what about the soldiers that came to your house?

Mark: Oh you want that too?

Barb: Sure, why not?

Mark: Well there was a time, they were not the SS, they were regular army. They used to come into my house because I had three sisters. Before they came in

they made sure that nobody sees them And they ran fast in the house. They locked the shutters. I locked the main door on a big bar. And they came in. They always brought us candy. And they brought cigarettes for my father. And my father was talking to them. My father was in the first World War in the German army. So they had a lot in common to talk about. And this was not the SS. This was just the regular army. They were very pleasant, very nice. And before they left I went out to make sure nobody sees them to going out. And this was going on for a few weeks until they got transferred. And the regular SS came out and took over everything. When they came in, they took all the men out, they put them in a, we had a bathhouse. Like a. Every Friday the men went to hot baths, you know. They put most of the men down there.

Barb: This was before you went to the square?

Mark: Before we went to the square. This is just a formality for a short time. And then they let us go home. You know. After a few weeks later they gave us one night, we have to pack up whatever we can. The next morning, ten o'clock sharp, we lock up the rooms and we go on the market. Everyone, all Jews have to meet in one place. When we got there, there was two lines of wagons with horses. The left side went to the cemetery, the right side went to Dembice, another city. We had to go to another city, join other Jews.

Barb: But how did you know what was happening with the other wagons?

Mark: Well, I know that the left side, by the time we start going, chasing us back and forth, I saw that, I was listen to shooting, a lot of shooting goes on. And the cemetery was only away maybe two miles from the city. And the same wagons were turning back every half hour.

Barb: Empty?

Mark: Empty. And we were still waiting in the right side, on the wagon, because it was loading up as much as it could. In the meantime, everyone was beating us up with chains, including the Polacks. And if you couldn't find

any Jews, the Polacks went to show where they're hiding. They were worse than the SS. And they beat us up something terrible. And they're pointing to us, "Juda, Juda," you're a Jew.

Barb: And these are the same people that were your neighbors.

Mark: These are the same people, we lived together, we went to school together, we make deals together, we had business together. This was the same people. After we left Radomysl into Dembice, we sat the whole night long on a field. And the SS was running around and poking people with the gun. And all kind of way they were standing on people's heads and trying to make us very uncomfortable. In the morning, trucks came and they were trying to pick all the young boys. Fifteen, sixteen, and they load on a big truck, everybody. And there were a lot of small babies, children. They put them in potato sacks, like they say. They tie up the top [of the sack]. There was another truck standing, throw them up there. And it take a few hours. In between this whole thing going on they took the religious people, the Hasidim; they made them put on their tallis. The SS was walking around with a big dog and they made them dance. The German Shepard was jumping on them and they were dancing. And I was already on the truck. I didn't know where I was going. None of us know where we were going, but we know we all young guys, they take us someplace. Too young they didn't need, they kill right away; and too old they had no use, they killed them also. With us, they took us to work.

Barb: And that was the last time . . .

Mark: This was the last time I saw my three sisters, mother and father, and the whole family, whoever was there. They took us to a place, the name is Jessoff [ed. note: The spelling cannot be confirmed. When I asked Mark why I couldn't find any reference to it on a map or on line, he said I would never find it. It was never on any map.] This is in Poland. It's a factory from airplanes. A defense place. Polish defensive but they [the Germans] took it over. When they took us there, we saw that we're going to work, at least. So they put us in barracks and they gave us orders: what to do, when to go to work. And they gave us one big barrack for hundreds of people. And our guards were Ukraiana [Ukrainians]. They were worse than

the Nazi. Most of them were forty, fifty years old. They were very, very rough and nasty. They were beating us every minute they could. For no reason whatsoever. Just show off that they could beat a Jew. A Jew. We worked there. Every morning we went to work. We made up screws for airplanes, from a large piece of steel, in the machinery. They show us how to operate the machines. And then after a few months later, I changed the job. They took me to another part of the defense [factory], and I was working on motors. One night I worked in the night shift from four to eleven, and I was holding on to the machine [inaudible] the motor. I fall asleep. One SS, actually he's not SS. He was wearing an SS band, he was wearing a black uniform, because SS were wearing green. The Ukrainians were wearing green and there was another group, the [inaudible] Ukrainians, they were wearing black uniforms.

They were worse than the Nazis to start with. They were beating up all the Jews there. They take advantage every second. And I was standing there. It was close to my time, shift, and I fall asleep. And I'm holding the machine down hard and all of a sudden this guy comes through. He had one arm. I'll never forget. He had, the left arm, he had no arm. He had one right arm only. Cause he has a sleeve down. He saw me sleeping. He beat the hell out of me. I never slept again. I never fall asleep again after that. I couldn't walk. And then I worked around there about nine, nine, eleven months, around this time. From there, Jesoff, they took us to city Plaszow. They call it Plaszow. It's under Krakow [ed. note: it's outside of Krakow]. They took us over there and over there we came in. We had to build our own barracks. We had to destroy a cemetery. The Fuehrer [ed. note: He is not referring to Hitler. Fuehrer is a German title meaning leader. In this case, Mark is talking about Amon Goeth, the infamous SS commander of Plaszow.], wanted the stones because they were.....not regular stones....I forgot what you call it . . .

Barb: The headstones?

Mark: The headstones, the marble. Fancy marble on the cemetery. There was a large Krakow cemetery. He [Goeth] wanted all marble stones taken off and make a sidewalk for him to go, because he lived down maybe about a mile away from the camp in a big mansion. So he want to walk . . .

Barb: Who's this?

Mark: This is the Ragafuehrur, a German. He was the commander from the Raga. They call Ragafuehrur. Commander from the Raga. [ed. note: I think Mark meant to say Reichsfuehrur not Ragafuehrur; however Goeth's actual title was SS Hauptsturmfuehrur]. So we had to take all the stones, make a walk to his house. And then there was a young SS, maybe sixteen or eighteen years old. He was maybe five foot tall and he had a German Shepherd that was almost five foot tall. They knew that the Jewish people had gold teeth in their mouth. He decided that we should dig up the whole cemetery, from one end to the other. Take each body out from the ground and take out the teeth. He was standing by us. He was loading up his pockets every day. And every day we find skeletons, heads, arms, and sometimes we find a full body with the white . . . In Europe nobody gets buried in caskets, in boxes. Everybody gets buried on the ground. It's just one piece of board you get, on the back. Everyone gets in the ground, like they say, dust to dust, ashes to ashes. So we couldn't find too many people still solid. So we find some of it. After they took out those bodies, so remained holes. We had to fill in those holes, take the skeletons with the bones. There was another big, very large pit hole, very, very large, and maybe a quarter mile all around. And very deep, must be like one floor down. We took all those things we were lined up in those wagons like you use for coal, on runners, what do you call it?

Barb: Coal cars.

Mark: Coal cars. And we had trucks. And we had to take all those things inside

on the trucks, we push them over to the pit hole, turn them over inside there, dumped it there, everything. This was going on for weeks. But every week. I was the youngest kid there. I was fifteen years old. And most of the men were in their thirties, twenties. There was one odare man. [ed. note: an odare is the same as a kapo.] An odar man is a policeman in the camp. One of the Jewish . . . You know there was SS, but they had to have from the Jewish people. They had to have policemen. Because the Jewish

people, you have to understand with the language and what everything has to be done. There was a regular police station. They wore uniforms. They were Jewish like we are, but they gave them a little right. A little bit of a right. They had better barracks, they had better food.

Barb: And what was the name of the place you were in now?

Mark: This here is Plazsow. Krakow was the city. Outside the city, they called Plazsow.

Barb: Was it a camp?

Mark: A camp. A very big camp. After we got done with this they killed the group out every couple days. But every couple days, this guy, this policeman, the Jewish fellow, he took me out, most of the times. I was the youngest kid there.

Barb: So he took a liking to you?

Mark: Oh yeah. He saved my life a lot of times. As we go around I'll tell you how many times he saved my life. After we got done with the whole cemetery, It took a long, probably a few weeks, months. He [Goeth] decided we should build barracks on the cemetery after everything is straightened out. We build barracks. They put us in, with more people in the barracks. Once a week or twice a week, you'd get a shower. And the food they give you was not so bad, because they try, you know, they gave us food because it was less food, less and less clothes, and less and less time to live. You live on water, one cup of coffee in the morning, five o'clock in the morning. And the night before you get one slice of bread. From a pound of bread they make twelve pieces. Twelve people get a pound of bread. One slice. This is the night before. And if you leave the bread, not guard it, you're not going to get it because people are hungry, so they are going to steal it. So you finish it when you get it, and tomorrow you have nothing to eat. So you work without food. So a lot of people are dying like flies because you're drinking water, you get diarrhea, you die, and that's it. I was in this place about a year. In between that year, in the beginning, I didn't know I have a cousin in the same camp. My cousin from Krakow.

Somebody came over to my barrack. He says there's a Kramer in another barrack, go take a look. I said what's his first name? He said his name is Sam. Oh I said, my god, this is my cousin Sam. My father's brother's kid. So I went over and I saw him. Because the last time we see each other we were very small. And from that time on we were together. We were two Kramers were going according alphabetically, so Kramer "K," we were together. And we have a number. The numbers were going . . . I didn't have a number printed on my hand. Only in Auschwitz. I was not in Auschwitz. I was wearing a metal piece with a chain. I was never allowed to take it off, day or night. It had to be on my hand. It was always rusty already. From rain, from working. You worked any condition,

Barb: Did it have a number on it or your name on it?

Mark: It was a number no. A number. There was no names in camps. You go by number. The last two numbers was 85, 86, this was us. It was a long number but they called always the last two. Because you know. . .

Barb: So you were 85 and he was 86?

Mark: Something like that. I made up after the war another one so I should have a memory. [ed. note. He made a copy of the bracelet after the war]. One time there was a young boy and a man, an old man, walking, after work, just walking around near the barracks. And they were whistling a Russian song. One SS man passed by and called those two people over, the kid and the man over. And he said to them, "Come here, come on, what's with the singing?" He [the man whistling] told him it's Russian. O.K. He arrested them right away, and the next day everybody had to go on the field, the whole camp. They hung them up. Both of them because they were whistling a Russian song.

When they hung them up everybody had to stay and look. Everybody had to look, and nobody has to say anything. The whole camp had to come out and watch those two hanging. Those two broke the string [the rope], the rope broke twice. They took one of the policeman, the Jewish policeman to hook up the ropes on their necks. The second time it happened, the SS man went over to the cop and he says to him, if this happened one more

time, you go with them. And everybody had to stay there and watch what's happening to those two people.

Now going back a while, I was working on a sanitation department. In German they call it Mark said a phrase in German]. We were cleaning the barracks around, all over like a sanitation department. After everybody was working we took care of the whole camp, cleaning, picking up everything, sweeping up everything. And this was in August, it was very, very hot. The heat was unbearable. You couldn't have a drink of water. And the barracks were open because the people were not allowed to close barracks. You go to work, everything has to be open for inspection. Every day inspection came in to see if the bed is made right. Unfortunately like an army, it was not an army, but it was a camp, a concentration camp. And we went inside [one of the barracks] just to cool off away from the sun. We went inside and one guy was standing outside to make sure nobody's coming. Well this SS man came, unfortunately somehow to the back and he sees one man standing outside, and he knows he's a sanitation guy and he's supposed to work. He gets inside and he had a whip. A very heavy whip. He start beat-ing everybody up. I was the lucky one, he beat me up so hard that the end of the whip went into my left eye and knocked my eye out. [ed. note. This story varies a bit from the story on the Shoah video. On the video Mark said they had to run out of the barrack one by one as the guard whipped them.] He knocked my eye out, I was laying on the floor and he left. This policeman, the Jewish policeman, his name was Duvick. This was a nick-name. He was not a Polish Jew, he was a German Jew. He was one of the best people in the world, even though he was a kapo. They call a kapo. A kapo means that he's working for the SS. He's a policeman for the SS because he's getting extra . . . he's not getting paid, but he's getting extra food, he's getting privileges because there was not freedom [inaudible]. He walks around with a [inaudible]. He wore a uniform. Happens to be that he was around there not far. It was happening he found me there. He took me to his barrack and he called a doctor. That doctor's name was Dr. Myroski. He was from Krakow, a Jew. He was already probably in his fifties or six-ties because his hair was white and I was only fifteen or sixteen years old and I don't know how old he was. They needed a place where to put me that nobody should know I am, to take care of my other eye, so my other eye shouldn't be affected,

because this one damaged and the because other one was running. . . . you know. This kapo, this policeman took me in a barrack. The policemen had a hospital room for the police there. Just there for the police, and this doctor came there quietly, every day. He checked me, he bandaged both my eyes, because it shouldn't affect the good eye. He injected, he injected, ... he needed milk, oh no, he needed milk for injections to give me temperature, I didn't run a temperature. So every time, . . . I was lying there four weeks, with two eyes. My eyes were bandaged and I didn't know it was day or night. The only thing after a couple weeks I recognized and I listened to the walk from the SS outside. When they walked on the cement, I know something is going to happen and I was scared to death, and I didn't know what to do.

Barb: So you were there all that time. How didn't they know,....didn't they do roll call? Didn't they know that you were missing out of your bunk?

Mark: No. This I don't remember.. I don't remember what happened, but he covered for me. He made sure this doctor comes every day to me, and makes sure he gives me the right, the proper medication that the second eye shouldn't be affected because of this one. It was very, very scary. It was pretty bad. After six weeks, he got me out of there. And this policeman took me into his barrack, and he gave me to eat food, and everything else. He watched me. He didn't let me go to work for a long time, and I had to wear a black band on my left eye.

Barb: Like a patch.

Mark: A black patch. But if you wore a black patch, you were afraid to go out.. The SS would see you. They don't like that. They don't need you. So I was hiding again in another place where the SS didn't come there, only the police. [Where the police] had there bathhouse, you know took showers there and all those things. So I was hiding there for quite a while until I started taking off the patch and get used to walking without it. Because I lost the vision in one eye, and you have to walk . . . in the beginning it was very difficult. And you got to watch yourself because every time you pass by an SS man when you walk you have to salute them, like a soldier and you turn your head towards him. Otherwise he'll call you back and shoot

you right on the spot. This was in this camp. And they had a place . . . People were going out to work every day outside the city, groups. And that odare man, that policeman [ed. note. Duvik], took care of me. He had a group going every day out to the city. They did some kind of work , like bombing the railroads, to replacing all those things, and cleaning the city, whatever. And every evening they came back and you went through a gate and they count you exactly as many go out has to come in. No matter if you're dead or alive. They take either way. The beginning a lot of people, of course they were born in Poland and a lot of people worked lived in Kra-kow. It's a big city, a very big city, and they know a lot of Polish people, you know, non Jews. And they passed by their homes, where they lived. So their neighbors were non Jewish and they gave them salami and bread and they stuffed it up their shirts inside. This was going on for quite a while. All of a sudden the SS by the gate sees that the front people are kind of bulgy. So he starts checking [phone ringing interrupts Mark's train of thought].

Barb: The salamis....

Mark: The salamis. With all kind of bread and whatever fruit. This was going on for a while. All of a sudden, the front guys came in and the SS, the guards saw that something is [inaudible] around the bodies. He starts touching their bodies and he sees they have a lot of stuff there. He told them to open up the rope [belts] and drop it on the floor. He let them go this time. Next day, same thing happened. He took the whole group on a very large hill, and they killed the whole group.

Barb: Everybody.

Mark: Everybody. One for all, all for one. And this was going on for quite a while, and I was hiding and looking up there, what's going on, how they were killing them. There was a very large pit, a very large hill and then there was a very big opening. And they had machine guns all around. And the police was not SS, they were Ukraine. We are making a big deal now about Ukraine, people don't know what the Ukraine did to the Jews in the war. Now we're making a big deal with Russia, with Ukraine. People forgot already. The [inaudible] went inside and the minute they went

inside, they put the machine guns and boom, boom, boom, everybody went. Then they take a group to undress them. They take away their wallets, their money, whatever they had.

Barb: But these were people in the camp?

Mark: The camp, but they came in with some things. They had a lot of friends in the city so everybody, they figure they have a few dollars or something you could buy a [inaudible]. . .

Barb: So these were people that were first being brought to the camp?

Mark: No this was people that had been to work every day. Outside this camp.

Barb: So their friends outside gave them . . .

Mark: Gave them things, you know. And if they find, and all of a sudden you find trucks coming in, they find a lot of non Jewish people. Non Jews. Young people bringing trucks of them.. And the same thing in another part. Another part of hill they made them running off the truck, down to the pit. And there's another group there. They are also shooting, killing them all around. Running. The way they run down, that's the way they shoot them up. And then you gotta go down. I worked there quite a long time. We had to take off their clothes. And they had wallets and watches, because they were not Jews. And they had rings and they had money and clothes.

Barb: So your eye was better by now? This was when. . .

Mark: By that time my eye, I was walking around without a black patch, or anything because was very dangerous to my life. So I had to do whatever I can to survive. So we went down there and we undressed them. And we had orders to put them up in stacks. Head to feet, feet to head, you know. Like burying them one on top of each other. Women on men, it don't make no difference. You stack them up and then we took one of those wagons with sand and we just covered them. And that particular camp could be thousands of people

lying one on top of each other. I don't know if they ever did anything after the war. I don't know. And one place they called, there's a name, a Polish name, they call it hulovagulka. [Later Mark told me "gulka" means hill and hulova is a derogatory term akin to "schmuck."] And this is, I can not explain this in English because there is no explanation, it's only a Polish thing. And we know when they are saying hulovagulka, we know, uh oh, anybody says hulovagulka, here goes another group, to be killed. This was going on a long time. After a year, I left Plazsow and we went to Mauthausen. Mauthausen, this is Germany. This was a camp, if you're lucky you come out alive, if not lucky you went to the gas.

Barb: They had gas chambers at Mauthausen?

Mark: This was Mauthausen with the gas chambers. Just like Dachau and all of those, Auschwitz and all of those camps. We came to camp, to Mauthausen, We had to undress ourselves, all nude. And they gave us a towel, this was in the night time. This was in the forest, very big forest, deep in forest. In Ger-many there's a lot of forests. Gave us a towel, they gave us a blanket at this end [time], because we had to leave everything, the shoes, the pants, every-thing, before we went into that, to take a shower. Everybody goes, hundreds of people at one time.

Barb: But they were real showers?

Mark: There were showers, there was gas. But we didn't know if we gonna go in the part with the shower, or we didn't know if we were gonna to the gas. So we just, we had no choice either way. Sooner or later they're gonna finish us. Doesn't make no difference. They're gonna finish us this way or they'll finish us with working without food. Because you could work sometimes twelve hours and they don't give you what to eat and then in the [inaudible] people they take you again, you know they don't care.

Barb: Did the kapo who saved you . . .

Mark: This kapo, no when I left Plaszow, I have to go back, I'm sorry I forgot something very important. Before I left Plaszow they took the whole group. Not the whole group, some of the group, not this goy who saved my life,

this is a few times he saved my life. He saved my life, every time I was working by the dead people, he took me always away, after it was finished to make sure I didn't end up with the others. He saved me a lot of times, quite a few times. Before we left, before we liquidated the camp [Plaszow], liquidation, he took a lot of the odar, odar means the police the Jewish police they're called the odare. They wore uniforms with caps, with belt but no guns. They wore sticks, night sticks, that's all. They took them and they killed them out and they left them laying out in the street. The SS . . .

Barb: Killed the odare?

Mark Yeah.[inaudible], whoever took care of them good all this time. . .

Barb: They killed.

Mark: On the end they didn't need them, because this camp is gonna be finished, liquidated. So they had to take all those kapos, all the police, the Jewish police and they just killed them out and we had to go through and see in the line there.

Barb: And he was one of them?

Mark: But this guy, what saved my life, somehow, I don't know if he didn't come back from the last trip, and went out from the camp and into the city. Because he had a privilege, he could take a horse and a wagon. He could go out and be there. The SS knew him and he could go someplace on his own. And then he came back, but this time maybe, you know, he went and never came back. So this is the last time I ever saw him. This was the end of this camp, Plaszow, Krakow. And now I came to Mauthausen, it was a new ball game altogether. When we got there, they undressed us, like I said before, they gave us a towel, they gave us a blanket. This was midnight, dark, in the woods, deep in the woods, forest, and you went. Take a shower and come out the other end. And from the other end they take you to a barrack. If there's a barrack, whatever. We were lucky, we came out from the shower and they made us walk around with the blanket, you know. And we walked around, one week without clothes.

Barb: What time of year was it?

Mark: It was warm. I don't remember, it must be around, uh, this was the following year. Could be May or June, around there, you know. We walked around like this, one week. This was a routine when everybody comes there. They take everything away whatever possessions you have. I still had some pictures from family. After this camp, in here you have nothing, nothing belongs to you. You not even allowed to have even a towel. Nothing. We walked around and it comes in the evening to go to sleep, everything is cemented, it's cement all over. There was, and there was a lot of bodies, not from our group, before, lying bodies all over the place, hundreds of bodies, just lying all over. And I see that I am going to have to lie on a cement, so I turned around, I grab a body and I put it under my head. At least I have something to lay on. The next day, they gave me something to eat. The same thing, you walk around a whole day long, because they were preparing you for Mauthausen. This was the main camp. From there they take you, they take you to camps wherever they need you. They send you out from there. We were there a week. From Mauthausen they send us to Melk, the name is Melk. This is Austria.

Barb: So you were only in Mauthausen about a week?

Mark: A week, that's all. When you go there [Melk], this is a camp with ovens.

Barb: Melk?

Mark: Melk. I have a paper, how you spell it. Melk, this is Germany.

Barb: Melk was in Germany or Austria?

Mark: Germany. Over there we were working. They took us to barracks. There were thousands of people living there. There were ovens. There were all kind bad things there. And it depends what condition you are. If you could hold on. In the meantime you're getting beating up every single day for no reason. On the job, off the job, or walking into the main door, the main gate.

Barb: Go ahead. I'm just making sure it's still working [the tape recorder].

Mark: In Melk I was working. There was a lot of bombing going on. We work in the fields, replacing tracks, for the Germans, because the United States were bombing little by little down there. And this was already in the forties. 1940, 1940, the beginning 1944.

Barb: 44 already?

Mark I'm going through a few years, you know. This was in 44 I think, beginning. And we were working there about a year. Working on tracks, replacing every morning. We had to get up very early in the morning. Very, very cold. We wore those uniforms. We wore the striped, striped uniforms. Summer, winter, the same thing. Rain, in winter we had to sleep in wet clothes, in snow clothes. You wore one shirt for six, seven months, till it fall apart. And every week, on the day of Sunday, you had to stand in line for hours.

Barb: They gave you a day off, huh.

Mark To shave. You had to be shaved all over. They put chlorine, some kind of strong stuff to uh

Barb: So for bugs and for lice and stuff?

Mark Yeah And after they shave, they would cut you short, your hair. They had to shave about two inches across from here down the back. This way if you run someplace they can see you from far away, you know. Even with the uniform, you know. Over there we worked every day, but it was winter already. It was already getting cold. In the winter time. We had to go to a subway, you know one of those animal trains, you know those big, only for animals they use. You know for cattle and stuff like this. And we had to get up very early in the morning when it was dark because we had to go through part of the city. And if the people in Germany said they didn't know anything about it, they are very wrong because we went through in the morning and went through in the night. And we were going five people. One line five people, and everybody had to be with the hands. You had to hold under your arm with everybody five people.

Barb: Oh, so you marched.

Mark We marched, yeah. We had to go from the train off to work, back and forth. We came in the night and went home in the night. And was cold, it was raining, it was snowing. And one time, I lost, I had two wooden shoes. So I lost one at a time in the snow, because the snow was very heavy there. And I have no socks. I had a rag. It was like rain and snow.

Barb: Slush?

Mark Slush. So what happened is I was crying because I was freezing. We came to the station waiting for the train. He had to wait a long time till daylight came. It starts to get colder and colder, my feet start to froze on me. So I was cry-ing, and my cousin Sam was with me. So he said, put you feet on mine feet, you don't have to stay on the snow.

Barb: So your cousin Sam went to Mauthausen and . . .

Mark: All the way He went from Krakow, from Plazsow, he went from one place, from one camp to the other with me already. We were together. So he said put your feet up on mine shoes and this way you don't have to stand with your feet on the snow. And we were crying, and then I said when I get back, I'll tell them that I was sent out without shoes, you know, I had to say something. And somebody was listening from the camp, from our people. Somebody was listening in the back he want to get credit when he comes back to the camp.

Barb: He wanted to turn you in.

Mark To get an extra soup or piece of bread or something, so he turned me in. By the time I got home, by the time I got back, we walked to the main gate. I was called by my name, by my number, and my cousin was called by my number. Both of us. When they call, you gotta stay like a soldier. Just like in the army. Guy comes over to me and he start beating me up. Then he told me that I was going to tell the camp, the lagafuehrer, the lagafuehrer [ed. note. Not sure of this word. I just spelled it phonetically], he's in charge in the camp. He was also a Jew. Every barrack had a Jew as a director in the

bar-rack. He was taking care of everybody. He was supposed to make sure you go out with shoes, you have a, you have something on, something, not nude. He had also, he had like an assistant. So I got beaten up so hard that he knocked a couple teeth out of me, and I couldn't walk back, I was crawling back to my barrack, and then my cousin the same thing. I couldn't sit, I couldn't lay on the wooden bed for weeks. And you have to go to work every day, and you gotta do the best you can. And you have to stay alive, you got to fight them. And then what happened is this. I was drinking a lot of water, and no food, so you get diarrhea. When you get diarrhea, you die. You just die because I was already, my legs were already swollen. My ribs you could see all over. And I was probably about sixty pounds already. Then what happened is, I was working deeper and deeper in the fields.

Barb: Did you ever get shoes?

Mark Yeah. I got a pair shoes, two wooden shoes whatever, and I was going on with my work. When I work on the railroad, I saw there was a field there. There was potatoes. So I went and I pulled up potatoes when the guard didn't see. I dig up some potatoes, I threw it in my shirt inside, I tied up a rope. And I was eating raw potatoes, with the mud, with the sand, with the skin, with everything. So with doing this I had more diarrhea. When were digging down to fix the railroad tracks, there was wood, coal, made out of coal. So somebody says to me, take the wood and eat.

Barb: Eat the wood?

Mark Eat the wood, yeah. It was like, like coal, you know. It was not really coal, it was wood coal. You could eat it. You could bite an end. It was not that hard, that you couldn't eat. This here I ate, it was black wood.

Barb: It was burned wood, like charcoal?

Mark Yeah, like charcoal. It was underneath, under the ground, and when I was working there, I find it. And I ate this, I was O.K., I didn't get no diarrhea, it took care my diarrhea. So I was living on the potatoes and on the wood, be-cause they don't give you what to eat. They give you one slice of bread

a day. This was going on for a long time, till they needed someplace else to replace us. We went from Melk to Linz, Austria. This is the time when the Russians start to get into the war and the United States got into the war, and they didn't have trains for us to take us from Melk to Ebansee, another camp. So we remained in Linz, on the water, in those cattle . . .

Minnie: Trains.

Mark: No, in the water it's like, like a, I don't know what they call them, like a. They were just boxes, you know and inside there, there's dozens of people inside. And you have like a toilet there. Everything is done there, and they don't feed you nothing. We were there a week, on the water, because they didn't have any train.

Barb: So this must have been after D-Day? After they invaded . . .

Mark No, no, no, this is before . . .

Barb: Before D-Day?

Mark This was not, this was 44.

Barb: Wasn't D-Day in 44?

Mark: 45

Barb: June

Mark: May 6th I was liberated. This is May 6th. This is 45. It's still 44.[ed. note. Mark is confusing D-Day June 4, 1944 with his liberation day May 6, 1945].This was in the wintertime you know. Then, September I think was it, 44, September, a week later they decided they gonna walk, they gonna make us walk, God knows how many miles, how many days, five days, six days we walked. And people were dying like flies, there was no strength to walk. Whoever died just remained lying on, all over the highways. And the Ger-mans [civilians] knew because it was a main highway. They say they never saw anything. They had to see. We were walking for, for, at least five

or six days, day and night. In the night time they took us in a field someplace to rest over night and they gave us water to drink. Just water, that's all. In the morning the same thing. I happen to be very strong, to survive all those things. And finally we made our [inaudible] where to go. Then they picked us up and we went to that camp. The camp was Ebansee. This is also Ger-many. Ebansee. That camp was outside the city, in the forest, very deep in the forest. Down below, all the down below, maybe three or four floors. Down below, approximately three floors down. And over there were barracks. And they took us in there to work. Over there was already the end of everything, because people were dying out, every second. They were standing by the electric gate, they wanted to get electrocuted just to get it over with. Because how much can a person take. This was in 45. We worked there for a while. Beginning of 45. And May 6th, all of a sudden planes are going all over. We saw that something is going on. And the Germans disappeared. Our guards are disappearing little by little. Because they heard the sound of the planes. It was United States planes. The sound was different than German planes. And they were getting lower and lower. And nobody was shooting on them, up. And we were thousands of people in that, thousands of guys in that barracks. They took us out from the barrack that day. After the few months working there, I'm getting to the end of this. After they took us out of there, I was walking already with a cane. One hand, in my other hand, my cousin Sam was pulling me. He says, "Come on Mark, don't give up.". And my legs already were like balloons. I couldn't walk anymore. I couldn't eat, I couldn't drink. The Allies came in. It took them three hours to find the camp. To get in to that hole. They know there's a camp, but there was so made, the Germans made it so sophisticated that nobody could find. First the motorcycles came. They trying to get down there. It was three hours till they came to rescue us. To get down there. And all of a sudden all the Germans disappearing. Before disappearing, there was a tunnel a mile away, a big tunnel. So they tried to get us in across the tunnel, they want to gas us up and get rid of us, because they don't want to leave any evidence. And most of the people were very dead people, everybody was almost dead. Another day or two or three, you didn't have to kill them, nobody even me. You just die like this. So they couldn't push us around because the police were going. And little by little there was less and less security. Nobody was watching over everything, there remained a few of them only.

Towards the end, towards the end came in from all over, they were bringing to camps even Russian people. Russian young guys, all kind of nationalities already. What reason I don't know, I have no idea what they did there. And they were strong, they were only in the camp a few months. They were young . . .

Barb: Political prisoners . . .

Mark: Political prisoners, whatever. And they caught a few Germans. They made a circle and they were tossing [the German guards] from one to the other. And they beat the hell out of them. They didn't kill them. When the Allies came in they put up very large kitchens. And they were feeding everybody macaroni. When they feed them macaroni with meat, people were dying right by the truck by the thousands, because their system could not take [it]. When I saw this I says, I'm not eating. I want just a piece of bread, a plain piece of bread. So what happened, they don't get, they don't push us into the gas chamber because it was too late for them. But people died because of the food. It was nobody's fault, but it's not the Allies fault. It happens to be that the whole company, the Allies was mostly Jewish soldiers, most of them Jewish soldiers. Cause, you know they had to speak a little Jewish, or what-ever you know to get around with all camps. And Eisenhower was there. In most of the camps he came the last minute, show up because he was very proud of his soldiers. They saved so many camps. And from that time on, they took us out from our barracks. They replaced us to the SS barracks, out of the woods on the main street, from down below. And the only thing we could have done is throw rocks on them, on the guards. That's all, that's the only thing we are allowed to do because, the soldiers, the Allies are not allowed to go over and hit them [inaudible], what they did to us, just you could throw a rock from far away. You could curse them, you could do whatever you want, but no killing. And they took them all away someplace, all the German guards that was left over. They took them probably to headquarters, someplace, for the MP, whatever. And this was the end of this camp. I was so sick, that I couldn't, I couldn't walk anymore. We walked down a couple blocks. It was all private homes. All German homes. And each house was empty. The furniture was there, the food was there, but nobody was there. The women were afraid because we are gonna come out, we gonna take advantage of them because their

husbands were all in the service.

Barb: Like you had the koyekh [ed. note. Yiddish word meaning energy]?

Mark: Yeah, no I mean take and kill them, or something, because we walked in the streets, you know, we didn't walk on the sidewalk for five years. We didn't know what it means walking in the street.

Barb: So the Allied soldiers didn't take you to hospitals or anything, they just . . .

Mark: They took most of the people to, my cousin end up in a hospital for a year and a half. Before he went there, we went a few blocks, a couple of houses down, and we're looking for bread. We saw gold, we saw rings, we saw money, we saw jewelry. And the Germans had everything. We saw crystal, the most gorgeous things whatever you saw in your life, their homes. We didn't touch nothing. The only thing we gonna look for a piece of dried bread, I'd be able to eat. And all of a sudden a lady, no, after a few days we went again to hunt for bread, you know. One German lady, an older lady, I think she was with a daughter or something. We went in there and she looked at us. She felt terrible. She said O.K., you come on in. She took us in, she cleaned us off a little bit, she gave us something to put on, different clothes. She made us food.

Barb: This I remember you telling me.

Mark: She made us food. She says to us, O.K. I'm gonna give yu medicine, your staying here as long as you want. You're going to sleep upstairs in the barn, because they had one cow I saw. And they had a barn with straw, you know. So she said you both of you sleep up there and every day I'm gonna give you medication, I'll give you food, make you soup, so I'll make you everything till you get back on your feet. And that's exactly what happened. She put us back on my feet. And my cousin's too, was sick, and they took my cousin away. He was a year and a half after the war in the hospital. And someplace in the hills. I don't remember the name of it. It was not in [inaudible], but it was someplace up in the hills with special people they have lung trouble, they go there. He was in a year and a half.

Barb: You want to stop now? Do you want to stop now? Is this a good place?

Mark: Yeah I guess so.

Barb: O.K.

Mark: That's enough.

BREAK

Mark: I remember the [inaudible] or the United States Army, whoever took us, probably the Allies, probably took us . . .

Barb: To Linz?

Mark: To Linz. In Linz, of course they gave us clothes and took care of us. They gave us food and they gave us housing. You know they took us not in barracks, in regular homes, where the Germans used to live. They gave us quarters, regular apartments. And they put in, we had, one, two, three bedrooms, a kitchen, a bathroom. We were, I was with my cousin, and there was two other people and a lady who was cooking for us. A Holocaust survivor.

Barb: From the picture you showed me.

Mark: Yeah, and we were there . . . I was there from 1945, May, June, probably June 45 til the day I left.

Barb: To come here?

Mark: To the United States, yeah. But I was there, I was trying to get myself together. Because I was still very sick, and after six months later, I joined the police force.

Barb: And Sam was in the hospital.

Mark: Sam was not there, no. I joined the police force. And we made up a small

police force for the local people who lived there. For all the DP's, all the concentration camp people. This way that the German police should not interfere with us. And the same with the MP's. If they needed something, they had to come up to our station upstairs saying they were looking for somebody or whatever.

Barb: So they had to go through you?

Mark: Had to go through us, the police. We had about five, six rooms, you know, the police station.

Barb: When you said German, you mean the Austrian?

Mark: Austrian, yeah.

Barb: O.K.

Mark: Austrian, Linz is Austria. O.K..The first thing they gave us was to wear caps and arm bands as a police, you know as [inaudible] by the people. Somebody should represent them, whatever they want. After a while they tried to make up uniforms for us. And the place got bigger and bigger. More and more people came and were settled in the buildings. And we had a very large community already. I stayed there till 1949, what was it, January 49. I left to the United States, because I arranged for a visa from my uncle for the United States, send me the papers.

Barb: Now, did this uncle come to the United States before the war broke out?

Mark: He came here before the war, yeah.

Barb: He was from your mother's side or your father's side?

Mark: He was my uncle from my mother's side. I came . . .

Barb: Did you remember he was here?

Mark: No. Through somebody, through my cousins, something, I don't remember what happened. My cousin Sam had a cousin here, and he got in touch with

my cousin and he said that there's another uncle on my side here and he's gonna get in touch with him and he's gonna send me passport. And this took a few years. In the meantime I was supposed to go to Israel or to Canada.

Barb: Oh!

Mark: And I refused to go both places. So I was in the police force about almost four years, three and a half years. And I went through training and all those things. Then what happened is, we left Linz, we went to Boston, we went by boat, the SS Marine Flasher, a war ship.

Barb: The SS Marine Flasher?

Mark: Yeah, it's a war ship. We had a very rough ride. It was very, very rugged. We came to Boston.

Barb: Oh, not to New York?

Mark: No.

Barb: Oh, so you didn't go to Ellis Island?

Mark: No, we came to Boston first.

Barb: Huh, I thought everybody went to Ellis Island.

Mark: No. Then they took us all out, and they put us on a train. The next day, the next night, wait a minute. The same day we came, that night, they send us . . . I remember it was night when we came to New York. New York City, because the lights were so, you know. We came to New York and I was waiting, my uncle was waiting and my cousin. They had a picture in their hand, looking for me. And I got into their car and went to Harlem, 167nd Street and Broadway, on the fifth floor, and I lived there a few months. And my uncle had a candy store, a luncheonette, 163rd Street. And the next day I was ready to go to work already. So I went with him to the store every day, and I helped him out.

Barb: Tell me about the CIA guy.

Mark: A couple days after I was in the store, I was standing outside on Broadway. Some gentleman passes by and he says to me, I know you from someplace. And I look at him, I says, of course I know you, I know you from Linz, from the CIA. We were together quite a few times. We were talking about certain, you know, certain business, by the police business. So he went to my uncle, and he says to my uncle, I'm taking him away for the day. And I went with him for the first time I saw a subway, a big subway, underneath. He took me to Manhattan to a movie someplace, and then late in the afternoon he brought me back to the store.

Barb: We gotta go back a second, because when you first came here, didn't you have a suitcase with shoes in it?

Mark: Oh, this, yeah.

Barb: I remember you telling me . . .

Mark: [Laughs]

Barb: Tell me that story.

Mark: [Laughs] When I came to Boston, we had to go to . . .

Barb: Immigration.

Mark: Immigration. I had two pieces of luggage made to order with covers. And my clothes and shoes, I had twelve pairs of shoes. And they were almost like new. So, the security told me to open up my suitcase. He opens up the suitcase, he says, what are you going to do? You gonna blackmail?

Barb: Black market.

Mark: Black market. I says, no. I didn't understand. I said no, it's mine, I bought it, I paid for it. It's mine. And I bought this in Linz, because I had a lot of connections. Nobody could get shoes, but I had connections, so I bought whatever I liked. They had grey shoes, they had brown shoes, all colors.

This was in style years ago.

Barb: See, I remember that story about the shoes.

Mark: Yeah [laugh].

Barb: See I remember.

Mark: [laughs] There's a lot of things I forgot.

Barb: Because you made a lot of money working there with the . . . Didn't you get money from the American Army?

Mark: When I worked on the police force, there was another incident, I have to go back. I was getting paid from the German government, from the Austrian government monthly. I got six hundred shillings whatever it was at that time. And I used to get from the MP paid also in dollars.

Barb: U.S. dollars.

Mark: U.S. dollars, or I could take out from the PX whatever want, to buy whatever I want. One day,[inaudible] I went to the city, to town, to Linz on the main street. And went to a café house. I was wearing boots and britches and a shirt. And I had gloves in my hand. And I happen to have a couple of single dollars in my gloves, because I was not allowed to hold dollars, it was against the law.

Barb: U.S. dollars.

Mark: U.S. dollars. I walked in the café, and I didn't know there is a lot of black market going on in this place. And I asked for, you know I sat down and I had myself an ice cream and a drink/ And I'm sitting there, and I had my glass on the table and all of a sudden two MP's come over to me. And they said, and they told me to stand up and come into the men's room. And they were checking me, they were . . .

Barb: Frisking you?

Mark: Frisking me, and they find in my wallet a lot of money, a lot of shillings, and they thought I'm going through some black market here because that place was known for it, and I didn't pay attention to it. They didn't put any hand-cuffs on me, they just told me I should go with them to the headquarters. This was in Linz, in Austria. I said O.K.. They took the money from me. This is the wallet [shows me a wallet], this is the same folder, same thing exactly. They took me in the station. I come in the station. In the meantime I get greeted by dozens of police, that they know me from before. All the Austrian police, and civilians, and in uniforms. That ask me what happened. So I said, I don't know. They took me up to the chief of the MP's. And he happened to be a Jewish, you know he happened to speak Jewish. I came in there and I have my papers, police papers.

Barb: Identification?

Mark: Identification with the picture. I gave it to him and he says to me, what happened, and I says to him I don't know. I was in the café house, and two MP's come over and they frisk me and they take me over because I had too much money with me. And this happened to be a few days before I got paid. And I didn't have, there's no banks, you know, you gotta keep it with you. You know there's no other place to keep it. So I explained to him. I said I just got paid, you know that I get paid every month. So he says, O.K.. He put back everything in the wallet, in the folder. And he says, thank you and he released me. And [laugh] I felt very funny, you know, as a policeman, I showed them I'm a policeman and you get arrested, but this is normal. They thought I'm doing some kind of black market. It happened to be a lot of people got arrested down there because they frisked all of them. They took them to the men's room. But since that time I never went back to that place.

Barb: Well you learned your lesson.

Mark: I learned my lesson. But I was going every night to a nightclub. This I had a good time, after, you know.

Barb: With the ladies.

Mark: No, we went with a few guys, we went to nightclubs, the same place. It was right on the borderline with the Russians and the Americans were stationed. You could look across and see the Russians standing there, by the wall. Opposite the wall was the Russians. It was east, and this was west Germany. [ed. note. Austria]. And when I arrived here [U.S.] that's what happened.

Barb: O.K., so you worked for your uncle.

Mark: I worked for my uncle a short time. And then I went to go for a job someplace else. So I went into an ice cream factory. My cousin got me a job at an ice cream factory. In the summertime it was ninety degrees [outside], I had to wear heavy clothes. I was eating a lot of ice cream. After four or five days I couldn't look on the ice cream.

Barb: Laughs

Mark: So I quit the job. It was too cold. Then I had no, I didn't know anything, I didn't have no profession, no nothing. So I decided to go to the union and tell them I know how to be a tailor. [laughs].

Barb: Oh, but you didn't.

Mark: Operator, whatever.

Barb: That's right you didn't know anything.

Mark: An operator. So they send me to a shop, a uniform shop. Where was it, in Green Point. Green Point in Brooklyn.

Barb: This is before you met Aunt Minnie?

Mark: Yeah.

Minnie: That's where he met Aunt Minnie.

Mark: And I moved, I went there for a job and I came for an interview. They asked me what I know. I says I don't know nothing. He says O.K., as long

as you're here, he says, I'll put you on the floor, you'll be a floor boy. You know what a floor boy is? I says no, what's a floor boy? He said, you pick up bundles and bring it to the machines and take away from the machines whatever anyone give you. I said good. This was the start. And then everybody, everybody, all the operators was bothering me, picking up bundles, change the [inaudible], sharpen the pencil. You know, this was my job for a long time till I get broken in to the how to use the machine. And then I used to go into the office, there was two girls there, bookkeepers. One name was Mary and the other was Minnie. And after a couple of days, I tried to keep going more and more to the office to sharpen pencils. [laugh]. Then I ask one of the girls out.

Barb: Which one?

Mark: One of the girls, her name was Minnie.

Barb: Oh, O.K.

Mark: I took her out, we went out to eat, or whatever a lunch. And then for dinner. And then I asked her where she lives. She told me where she lives. I went to the house.

Barb: You didn't speak English?

Mark: No.

Barb: And she didn't speak Yiddish?

Minnie: I understand Yiddish.[inaudible], I always did.

Mark: No. So I went to see and meet her parents and everybody in the family. And a few weeks later I decided to move out from Manhattan, from Harlem into Brooklyn because the shop was in Brooklyn.

Barb: And Minnie lived in Brooklyn.

Mark: So I moved into an apartment.

Barb: But you didn't understand a word she said.

Mark: Well I understand a little bit. I was that, you know. I was working with a lot of MP's and those kind of things so you know a few words, not many. Then I moved into a family on [inaudible] street. [laugh] On [inaudible] street to a family in one room. I was sleeping there. And every day I was going to work from there. And I met this girl Minnie every single day for lunch and then for supper we'd ride home on the same train. And most of the time I'd end up in her house, for free meals.

Barb: [laugh] And now the truth be know.

Mark: [laugh]

Barb: Did you babysit before you got married or after you got married?

Mark: After.

Minnie: It was before.

Mark: We were engaged. No.

Minnie: We were engaged. Four months later we became engaged.

Mark: I was going out . .

Barb: That was quick.

Mark: I was going out with my, what is now my wife. I was going out a couple months. A few months later we became engaged.

Minnie: We became engaged in September. He started working there May 1st.

Mark: And the following . . .

Minnie: September we became engaged and January 1950 we got married.

Mark: September 49 I got.....

Minnie: Six month later.

Barb: So you were only here a year.

Minnie: He was here four months when I met him.

Mark: Yeah. I was four months here.

Barb: He was here in January 49 and in January 50 . . .

Mark: I got married.

Barb: He was married. You're a quick worker.

[everybody talking over each other]

Minnie: Four months later we became engaged, and right after that we got married. In January.

Mark: We got married in January 7, 1950. So I was over a year old when you babysat for me.

Minnie: We were engaged, you were about six, seven month old.

Barb: No. 1949, He was here in May. July 49 I was a year old.

Mark: I remember we went once to my . . .

Barb: I was just still in diapers.

Mark: I went once to my sister, my wife's sister, I wasn't married that time. And they had a little girl there. Lying on the bassinet and my wife, my girlfriend went over to change her diaper and she had a rough time changing because she didn't know what to do. So I says, wait a minute, I'll do it for you.

Barb: How did you know how to diaper a baby?

Mark: I don't know. I just did it. That's all.

[everybody laughing]

Minnie: He does everything naturally.

Barb: Did she have a cute tush or what?

Mark: A very cute tush.

[everybody laughing]

Minnie: One thing I remember, you were lying on a bassinet in the bathroom, and I closed the door to diaper you. He was in the living room.

Mark: She was there so long, I didn't know what happened to her.

Minnie: I said I can't find the powder. And I talked to myself and all of a sudden you went like that [motions with her hand], with your hand. Maybe it was just a natural reflex.

Barb: Pointing.

Minnie: Pointing to the window sill.

Mark: It was over there.

Minnie: On the window sill was the powder.

[everybody laughing]

Barb: I remember that story.

Mark: Since that time on I was visiting Helen, my sister-in-law and her two kids. And we spent a lot of time together.

Barb: So January 13, 1950?

Mark: January 7th was the wedding. Yeah in 1950.

Barb: And on that piece of paper, you left Linz, January 7, 1949.

Mark No.

Barb: It says.....

Mark In 49, yeah I left Germany and I came here, I came the 16th of January.

Minnie: But January 7th we got married.

Barb: And you left Linz on January 7th?

Mark: Yes.

Minnie: See that I didn't even know.

Barb: You see. You left Linz on January 7th in 49 and you got married on January 7th in 1950.

Mark: I left January 7th, Linz, Austria. I came to Boston on the 16th of January.
And January 7, 1950 I got married.

Barb: See that's a very lucky day.

Minnie: Forty years.

Barb: I know.

Mark: Then we lived in Sheepshead Bay.

Minnie: Stuart was born.

Mark: And Stuart was born.

Barb: And when did you open the tailor shop?

Mark: I opened up the tailor shop before Stuart was born.

Minnie: 53, 1953.

Barb: Park Cleaners?

Mark: This was not Park Cleaners. It was another, our first store. A smaller store.

Minnie: On Avenue Y and Ocean Avenue.

Mark: Avenue Y and Ocean Avenue. About a couple blocks away from the house.
And I used to go home to eat lunch.

Barb: But Park Cleaners was after . . .

Mark: Park Cleaners was in 1969 . . .

Minnie: We worked together.

Mark: 1959.

Minnie: Our boss came to the wedding, our foreman came to the wedding.

Mark: In 1959 I went in partnership with a friend, a friend of mine. Into Park Cleaners in Sheepshead Bay. This lasted till 1973.

Barb: And that's when you came here [Los Angeles]?

Mark: That's when I came here. I came here 73 to California.

Barb: O.K., that's it.

Mark: There's a lot of things out but I can't remember, so many things. It's not, uh, I don't remember those things.

December, 1998

I MARRIED A "HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR"

I was born and brought up in Brooklyn, New York, by parents who came from both Romania and Vienna, many years earlier, when they were teenagers. My sisters, Helen, Nettie and I were also brought up by our parents, in a "Jewish, European style home. They never stopped talking about their "homeland". Both my parents passed away the first day of Purim, one year apart, in 1968 and 1969.

My sisters, Helen and Nettie, are still living in Brooklyn, New York, near their children and grandchildren.

In the 1940's, I was single, and dated American boys. They were nice enough, but no one special that I would want to marry. My mother told me that the "boy I was looking for, was not born yet". I really did not know who, or what I was looking for, but I did know that someday, I would meet the "right" one for me. I always believed in "fate", and I still do.

Well...that day finally came. It was May 1, 1949. A day I will never forget. For many years, I had been working for a large company, that made Army and Navy uniforms. I handled their large payroll of 500 piece-workers, and all their records. One morning, on May 1, 1949, a young handsome man with dark wavy hair, and brown eyes, was standing before me, at my desk. As I looked up, he smiled, and gave me his name. I understood he was a new employee, and also new to this country. He hardly spoke English, only Yiddish. Since I understood Yiddish very well, I understood him. I asked him all of the necessary questions we needed from a new employee. The rest of that day, he came into the office many times, to "supposedly" use the pencil sharpener, which was on my desk. At 5:00 p.m. as I waited for the elevator to leave the building, this handsome young man was standing next to me. Well...a short time went by, and four months later, in September, we were engaged, and four months after that, on January 7, 1950, we were married.

I knew not long after we met, that it was "fate", that I should meet this young man who came to me from another world, far, far, away. He was very "special", and I knew it in my heart.

My parents and sisters took a liking to him, as soon as they met him. So did my close friends. But my close friends were a little worried and told me so. Also, my employer, and the two foremen in the factory, (I had worked with them for five years) not because they did not like Mark Kramer, in fact, they liked him very much. But they were worried about me, since I was born American, and Mark was from another country, another world, and who did not know the English language, or the American customs. They asked me, "how will you get along, as far as language, and you are from two different worlds?." They said to me "marriage is hard enough when two people are from the same country, and speak the same language. Think about what you doing". But I knew in my heart, that Mark and I were right for each other.

We had faith, and I knew we were doing the right thing. Mark and I truly loved each other, and we understood each other very well. I admit, it was not easy for either one of us. We both took a chance, but it also was not a hardship. We learned to understand each other's customs, and each other.

It did not take too long, before Mark became "Americanized, and he received his citizenship papers. He adjusted to the American way of life, very fast, and we were very happy.

As time went by, we raised two beautiful, wonderful children, who are very close, and very dear to us; our son, Stu, and our daughter Debbie. We now have a terrific grandson, Adam, who had a Bar Mitzvah last year. Also, we have a beautiful daughter-in-law, Sandi, whom we love very much.

As the early years went by, I learned a great deal about Mark's past. About his parents, three sisters, 66 relatives, who perished in the holocaust. I also learned, a little at a time about his suffering, and his being tortured in the six different concentration camps, he was in, and how he lost the sight of one eye, from the beatings he received in the camps, since the time he was 15 years old, until he was liberated in 1945, at the age of 21 years old. I learned how he survived, and how he lived, after being liberated.

For many years, after our marriage, I listened at night, to his crying and screaming, in his sleep. I understood him very well, but I was helpless, and could not do anything about his nightmares. This hurt me very much, and I cried into my pillow, knowing what he was going through.

Mark very seldom talked about his horrible experiences in the concentration camps. Occasionally, he would talk to me about it. But when he did, it made him sick, and again he would cry, and scream in his sleep. He could not talk about it, and still can't, after all these years, because he suffers afterward, and again does not sleep for days. He suffers inwardly.

About 3 months ago, in May, 1998, because his doctors had convinced him to do this, Mark agreed to be interviewed on film, from Spielberg's office, by the Shoah Foundation. This was a very difficult task for him to do. He was very nervous about doing this. He told me afterwards, that he could not tell them everything that happened, only part of it, which was bad enough. I saw the film recently, and it made me sick.

Mark is very "special" in so many ways. He was a "son" to my parents. They never considered him a son-in-law. He always called them "Mama" and "Papa". They loved each other like parents and a son. I remember one night, when we were at a hotel in the Catskill Mountains. The social director asked the audience, if there is a man in the house, who has his mother-in-law's picture in his wallet, to please stand up. Mark was the only man in the audience, who carried his mother-in-law's picture in his wallet.

To my sisters, he was never considered a brother-in-law, only a brother...they still send him birthday cards to a "brother". They couldn't be any closer.

Mark was, and is today, the best husband any woman could wish for. A "diamond",...but more precious. To our children and grandson, he is their "idol". He would give them the world, if he could, and take away all their problems, if only he could. Their problems and worries, are his problems and worries.

To our friends, there are no words to describe his goodness, and honesty. He could never say "no", always trying to help in any way possible. Mark is a friend from the heart.

Living with a survivor, it sometimes amazes me, to think how Mark can be so good, compassionate, understanding and caring, after all he has gone through in his life. He is not, and never was, a bitter person, due to his past. His personality is to be admired. He has a wonderful sense of humor (he is also an excellent dancer). Mark loves to be with people, and talk and laugh with them.

Outwardly, you would think he doesn't have a care in the world. But what he feels in his heart, he keeps to himself. He never wants to worry his family. He loves to be with his family and friends, and enjoy himself. G-d only knows, he certainly deserves this.

We have had our "ups" and "downs", with problems throughout the years, but we overcame these problems, together.

Thank G-d, Mark and I never had a problem as far as our "marriage from two different worlds" are concerned. We did the right thing back on January 7, 1950, when we both said "I do". We proved to our friends who were worried about us, that "love can conquer all". They are now very proud of us.

Living with a survivor, as I have, takes a lot of understanding, caring, patience, and above all, love. This I will always have for that "young, handsome man I married 48 years ago. I thank G-d for all these years, and pray for many more, healthy ones. Whatever the future holds for us, Mark and I are survivors, in different ways. Mark survived the horrible holocaust, and we both survived and came through those early years of marriage, learning, and getting to know and understand each other, since we were from two different worlds.

To answer those questions, earlier, "how will we get along"...two people from two different worlds???

Our faith and hope, and love pulled us through, and "we made it", I am very proud to say. I am very proud to be married to this very "special" survivor.

We are looking forward to celebrating our "50" wedding anniversary in the year 2000, together with our family and friends.

Minnie Kramer

Radomyśl Wielki History



The official history of the town of Radomyśl Wielki seems to begin in 1581. On 31 January of that year, nobleman Mikołaj Firlej asked King Stefan Batory to confer town rights on the settlement that existed there. The king did so, granting the settlement the rights to hold a weekly market and two large markets (or fairs) per year; he further exempted the residents from taxes for a period of four years. At the conferral of these rights, Firlej bestowed his lion coat of arms upon the town (see picture above). According to "The History of the Jewish Commune in Radomyśl Wielki" by [Jan Ziobroń](#), town rights were lost between 1919 and 1934 because of a redefinition of what a "town" was; [another source](#) also refers to increasing competition by Mielec in the beginning of the century, at which time, according to Ziobroń, the town had been particularly famous for its fairs.

Ziobroń also notes that the settlers had been both Christian and Jewish and that the granting of town rights caused a large migration to the area. My other source supports this, favorably comparing the size of the town in 1662 (336 residents) to neighboring Dębica (270), Mielec (458), and Tarnów (768); it also refers to the establishment of a school in 1602. The town's importance at this time was recognized on 1 August 1665, when King Jan III Sobieski visited. However, Radomyśl's success was hampered by a number of events which were also experienced by other towns in what was then called the Małopolska region: natural disasters, numerous fires, and military events; one of the fires destroyed the church building, which was rebuilt in 1779..

The town also experienced a series of different owners: from the Firlej family in the 16th century, it passed into the hands of the Aierzejewski [sic], Bliżkowski, Tymienicki, and Wodzicki families in the 17th century. The Wodzickis, who acquired the area in the 1640s, held onto it until the 19th century, at which time it became the possession of the Stadnicki family. The Stadnickis built a mansion on the rynek in 1813, along with other gated buildings. In the 1830s Ignacy Stadnicki transferred ownership to Józef and Olimpia Bobrowski; upon her husband's death, Olimpia managed the property for over 30 years.

During the [first partition](#) of Poland in 1772, Radomyśl was part of the large southern area of Poland that was taken by Austria (Galicia); it existed under Austrian rule until Poland regained political statehood in 1918. During that time, around 1850, Radomyśl became a [powiat](#); according to Ziobroń, it was not only a trade and administrative center, but also had its own court and was a "church center"; in fact, it was in 1907 that the town's name was changed from "Radomyśl" to "Radomyśl Wielki." Ziobroń also referred to an 1849 map (which is apparently in his book, *Ziemia Radomska*, 1991) that demonstrates that the town was divided along the rynek (town square) into Jewish (east) and Christian (west) areas, both of which were affected by fires in 1871 and the region-wide 1873 cholera epidemic. Two of the population statistics offered by Ziobroń include total town populations of 3,141 in 1888 and 2,432 in 1925; the turn-of-the-century saw a large emigration of both Jews and Christians (a town search on [Dr. Stephen Morse's](#) Ellis Island-related website demonstrates this). However, according to Ziobroń, in 1939 (right before World War II) the population was the largest in the town's history at 4,190.

Although World War I had produced little damage to the town, it didn't escape devastation during World War II. September 1, 1939 was the day Hitler attacked Poland. Eight days later Radomyśl Wielki was the scene of battle. According to Ziobroń, on that day the Catholic church was used as a prison for around 300 men who had been taken to avenge the deaths of the Germans killed during the fight for the town. If I may quote from his article (which really should be read in its entirety):

During the following night the Germans dealt cruelly with those in the Church. The hostages were asking for food and water. This protest was interrupted by a German soldier who opened the main door to the Church and shot several rounds from a machine gun into the hostages; many were killed or wounded. After a few days the prisoners of war were taken away and everybody else was freed. About ten Jews died in the Church.

But, of course, this was not the extent of Jewish suffering in the town, as Ziobroń's article makes clear; following a series of persecutions, the Jewish population of the town was destroyed on 19 July 1942; some people were able to survive, but most perished. Other articles on the Jewishgen Radomyśl Wielki [Stetl Links](#) page, as well as narratives by survivors in the [Radomyśl Wielki Yizkor Book](#), are necessary to read.

Christian residents, while not targeted as were the Jewish residents, also suffered. Christian men constituted a large portion of the 8 September hostages. In addition, while examining 20th century Roman Catholic death records for Radomyśl Wielki (LDS film #2004900, Item #2), I discovered a document in Latin and German that had been inserted into the original register. This document provided the names of Roman Catholic Poles and invading Germans killed during the 8 September battle for Radomyśl Wielki, as well as 2 maps showing the burial locations of at least some of the Germans. There were 12 Polish soldiers and 5 Polish civilians who were referred to in that document:

- Józef Marszał, born in Sanok in 1914
- Józef Perlowski, born in Rzesów in 1915
- Antoni Piotrowski, born in Kolomyja [sp?] in 1914
- Jan Lalik [I think], born in 1913, location not mentioned
- Stefan Szumilas, birth information unreadable
- 7 other soldiers who seemed to have been unidentifiable {"Sept polonieii milites sine documentis sepulti sunt"}

- Katarzyna Sochalka from Wólka Duleczka (a hamlet of Radomyśl Wielki)
- Władisław Kudzdel, son of Jan and Maria, born 17 February 1918
- Stanisław Stropka from Biesów
- Stefan Gebel from Nowy Targ
- Jan Kulczycki from Wadowice (following his name is the phrase--in Latin:"written in the book of deaths for Wólka Duleczka")

Part of the battle may have taken place at the southwest corner of the gmina, because the map showing the burial locations of the Germans appear to be at the southern tip of the gmina on Route 984.

That same month Radomyśl Wielki ended up being on the retreat route of the Polish Operational Group "Boruta"; I haven't been able to determine yet whether this is connected with the above casualties. What is clear, however, is that within the first year of the war, a cell of the Union for Armed Struggle (Związek Walki Zbrojnej)--later to become the Home Army (Armia Krajowa)--arose in Radomyśl Wielki. Among other local sites, resistance fighting took place at Ruda--including the first retaliation on 11 January 1940. Some of the AK heroes mentioned in my defunct source, who I believe were from Radomyśl Wielki, are:

- Józef Garlach (code name "Orzeł")
- Lucjan Woźniak ("Graff-Szczerba")
- Józef Bury ("Mocny")
- Stanisław Sołtys ("Sara" or "Wujt")
- Jan Błachowicz ("Kropidło"), leader of a Peasants' Battalion
- Ludwik Dudek ("Grab")

Also alluded to by the source was the Reverend Kaczmarczyk, who is one of three priests honored on a plaque just inside the church's main door. Flanked on the left by the symbol of Polish resistance and on the right by a shield enclosing Mary and the Christ Child, the plaque (translated) reads:



*In the service of God, Church and
Fatherland*

*Priest/chaplains gave their lives
Home Army in Radomyśl Wielki*

*Father Jan Curyłło (1896-1969)
Code name "Bolesław"*

*Service as Provost of the local parish
Captain, AK [Home Army] Mielec
District*



*Father Stanisław Kaczmarczyk
(1906-1942)*

*Code name "Zimny" Murdered in
Auschwitz
and*

Father Adam Sekuła (1913-1941)

Vicar
Tortured by the Nowy Sącz Gestapo

In the winter of 1941 the Gestapo arrested 36 members of the Radomyśl Wielki unit, but it continued to function.

Sabotage and other resistance activities yielded to full-blown battles in the summer of 1944, when the front approached the town. On 27 July, an 18-member patrol engaged the Germans in the Black Forest on the Radomyśl - Tarnów highway; other actions occurred, culminating in a ferocious battle from 20 to 24 August. The town was attacked on the 21st, setting off fires that destroyed the church and engulfed the town in flames. Over the next three days Radomyśl Wielki was repeatedly taken by the Soviets and then retaken by the Germans, until finally it was liberated from the Germans on the 24th. The following excerpts from a news report in the 24 August 1944 *New York Times* (p. 2) provide a bit more information:

[Communiqué of 23 August, broadcast from Moscow within the Soviet Union, and picked up by the U.S. Federal Communications Commission] Troops of the First Ukraine Front, developing their offensive, on Aug 23 carried by assault a large center of the aircraft industry and important railway junction, the town of Dembitsa (Debica) and also fought their way into more than seventy inhabited localities, including the large inhabited localities of Otalez, Wampierzow, Radomysl-Wielki, Zarowka . . ."

[Soviet communiqué at midnight, 23/24 August] Troops of the First Ukraine Front, under cover of powerful artillery fire, forced the River Wisloka. By an impetuous onslaught Soviet units broke through a belt of the enemy defense and gained possession of the highway junction, Radomysl-Wielki. Developing their success, our troops carried by assault the town of Debica. The 671st and 669th Regiments of the 371st German Infantry Division were wiped out.

The final postwar tally: 75% of the people of Radomyśl Wielki had disappeared, and 80% of the buildings had been destroyed.

Since that time the church and many other buildings that suffered destruction during the war have been rebuilt, the town was electrified in 1951, and new construction has occurred. Of course, until the "fall" of Communism in 1989, Radomyśl Wielki was not completely liberated.

To this date I've found few sources offering information on the history of Radomyśl Wielki. In writing this page I've relied almost exclusively on the two sources I mentioned above, one of which can be found on JewishGen's Radomyśl Wielki Shtetl Links webpage; this and other websites that provide historical information can be accessed via my [Jewish Community](#) page on this site. In addition, the Polish Genealogical Society of America has a webpage that offers English translations of [some entries](#) from the late 19th century *Słownik Geograficzny* (Geographical Dictionary of the Polish Kingdom); Dulcza Mała, Dulcza Wielka, and Wólka Duleczka are the Radomyśl-related localities currently found on the page.

Finally--and I wish I'd known about this when I was there--there is a local history museum in Radomyśl Wielki, housed in the green Zespół Szkół at Kościuszki 2, on the Rynek. Open on Tuesdays from 10 a.m. to noon, it's called "Regionalna Izba Pamięci."

The First Days with the Germans

by Haja Garen-Rozenblat (now Levi)

As Hitler's first units entered the town they found the market-place deserted; the streets empty. A fearful silence had fallen upon all and nobody was there to greet them.

Behind locked doors and curtained windows eyes were watching anxiously asking: "And now what?!"

Just before our "guests" arrival, people had been saying that one should have treats, cakes and liquor, ready for them and one should make them eat as soon as they come in. Having helped themselves, they might be nice and spare their hosts. So we set the table with all the best food we had and waited. The family gathered in the inner room of the house; father thought it safer in case of some possible shooting.

Single shots could still be heard from the direction of Wilki, a suburb of Radomysl, as the Polish Army made some unsuccessful attempts to stop the Germans. The area was burnt down and when the shots ceased finally, in came Hitler's army into our town.

Four o'clock in the afternoon. German patrols were tearing through the dormant streets of Radomysl. The town was very quiet. They came humming noisily filing the market completely.

Doors and windows were shut down. Suddenly a heavy pounding was heard; someone tried to break into our store that was in the heart of the market-square. A mad savage voice shouted from outside: "Open up immediately or we shall use an axe!" Afraid to budge we stood there, scared to walk over and open. Our faces turned a shade paler. Another heavy push and the door gave in. "I shall let them in!" I said and made my father lie down and cover his beard. Then I walked towards the store.

I made a tremendous effort to put on a gay amiable smile. Smiling pleasantly I opened the door and exclaimed: "Welcome!" The murderous expressions changed all of sudden and they demanded to know whether there was any Polish soldiers in the house or any hidden weapons. I said there weren't any. They did not take it for an answer and pushed into the house searching thoroughly. They looked into every corner, opened closets, turned over mattresses causing an upheaval. Whenever they got hold of something they liked, they piled it up neatly in the corner. Every room was treated the same. They pretended to look for arms but were actually looting. I tried to draw their attention to the food but they refused politely telling me they were in a hurry. Then they did not feel like taking anything but instead felt like making love to me and my sisters. Luckily my sisters managed to get them out of the house and get rid of them somehow. We feared they might come back later at night, and drunk too, but still we felt relieved having gotten them out. The feeling of relief did not last long, as another patrol entered our house shouting at the top of their voices: "All men out to register!"

I trembled at the thought that they might discover father and our brother-in-law, who wasn't young either. Again I spoke sweetly: "How about a little drink or a piece of cake?" Not waiting for another invitation, they sat down and started stuffing themselves gorging on the food. They invited the others to join in. Father, my sisters and another little boy, sat down trying to make conversation. Meanwhile

another patrol came in and joined the celebration. That was how we passed the time till eight o'clock at night. We weren't conscious of the rioting that went on in our town that day.

The Germans herded all the males, Jews and Gentiles alike, and placed them in a church. Beaten cruelly they were kept without food or water for three days and nights. Wives and children, sisters and brothers stood outside the church bundles of food and jars of water in their hands, but nothing was allowed in. The town was in a state of terror.

As the church was packed with men, and the doors and windows shut, the air inside became unbearable. Whenever someone fainted he was immediately shot and left among the living.

It occurred to us women to bribe the officer in charge. Since ninety percent of the men held in the church were Jews, a large amount of money was raised in minutes. With the money in hand we tried to persuade the officer. It wasn't very hard; he took the money and promised to talk to his superior officer. Permission was granted – water and food were allowed in, though we had to hand it over to the guards. Thus, only a small portion of the parcels reached the prisoners; most of it simply disappeared. Another result: the corpses, that lay prostrate beside the semi-dead prisoners, were removed. There was no possible way to set them free. We searched for other means. We presented doctors' health-certificates thus managing a few releases. Six days later, some were set free – others were taken to an unknown destination. Much later, those too returned to Radomysl.

Meanwhile, all sorts of German regiments passed through our town. They stuck their noses everywhere, stole, looted, beat people up and shorn old men's beards. They shot those who looked suspicious. To save our father's beard I gave away a hundred meters of fabric; a deed for which I gained the reputation of the town's heroine. My father was one of the few in town who still had his beard, but not for long.

Within a couple of days new trouble was in sight; the "Hitlerjugend" units were about to pass through our town. We were told that the soldiers we had met already were 'angels' in comparison. People wondered and asked what could be done. It was certain that death awaited those unable to hide themselves. Walls, floors, ceilings, were tested as potential hiding places. Echoes of hammering could be heard as people spent days in attics building secret hiding places that would be difficult to trace. In most cases, holes were dug under the floor; first small ones, enough for one or two persons, then roomier ones for ten people. The reason for enlarging a hiding place was due to the neighbors' intervention. They claimed that the bigger the place the safer and easier for everybody. What were those places like? Generally they were cellars dug under the floor; deep, broad, and almost half-a-room in size. There was no furniture. A well-hidden entrance led into the cellar. The ceiling above was carpeted. Obviously such a hole was stifling, so a small opening was dug in the foundation of the house. After a certain period of time one could easily suffocate for lack of air.

Almost every house in Radomysl had a hiding place for the men in case the glorious "Hitlerjugend" units were to pass through our town. They were expected on Friday. Heaven was merciful – they didn't arrive that Friday.

The regular soldiers of the "German Wehrmacht" stationed in the town had grown accustomed to the Jews; thanks to the Yiddish language they could communicate more easily with Jews than with others. Among the so-called "good Germans... there were, of course, some scoundrels who under the influence of some slanderous "goyim" would break into Jewish stores and empty the goods straight into the lusty hands of the gathered peasants. At the beginning it happened quite rarely, then more and

more frequently, Men and women from neighboring villages crowded the market with their wagon. The appetite for Jewish property grew bigger and Jewish stores grew emptier.

Smart store-keepers hid some goods in the attics; most were scared to do likewise as rumors circulated about that the peasants had already informed the Germans and threatened to show them the attics. An atmosphere of doom lay on the town.

Us women – as the most important element in town – felt that something should be done to stop the looting. We chose two pretty German-speaking girls and sent them to talk to the authorities. The officer in charge – mean as Hitler himself refused to see the girls. They were given an explanation: "He does not talk to Jews!"

Life was bitter. The situation quite hopeless: "God's will cannot be challenged," said the orthodox. How should one exist under such circumstances? Some said: 'Nothing matters either way: slow starvation is worse than death.

On the Sunday morning of following week, I heard a knocking on our neighbor's door. I sat up in my bed quickly and looked through the window. I saw men in black uniforms. My heart pounded. I remembered being told that the "Hitlerjugend" wore black outfits, so I ran into my parents' room to wake my father. He was asleep. I helped him into his clothes and hid him in the hiding place under the floor, piling all kinds of things on the place where it was hollow underneath lest someone walked there. Confused, half-dressed, I ran to warn my sisters and urge my brother-in-law to hide quickly. They knew already; my younger sister, the one married to Mendel Eisland, had already had the honor of "entertaining" the rascals. Not having found any men in the house, they had become furious and while having spilled a barrel full of water right at the doorstep. They had slammed the door as loudly as they could exclaiming: "Where have the men disappeared to?!"

I hastened on; friends, relatives had to be warned. I looked like a mad person. I ran scared to look back for fear of being stopped. Suddenly, I heard a female voice screaming. It was Ziphora, Michal Fish's wife. She wailed: "oi! vay! They are going to shoot my boy. What shall I do? What shall I do?" While trying to comfort her, I saw two S.S. men leading a large group of Jewish youths. They were taken straight out of their beds, half naked, with only their pants on. Closing the procession many S.S. followed urging the prisoners to run hitting them with rifle-butts and rubber-clubs. "Oi! How awful!", I said to myself. "What will happen to these Jews? Will they shoot them or send them away to labor-camps?"

Meanwhile others were brought into the market-square, carrying brooms and shovels. Elderly men, some sixty or seventy years old, followed the young ones. Sick people were dragged out of their beds. A young SS, about seventeen years of age, made them run back and forth, half-naked, barefooted, their beards shaved. Running to and from, they were being clubbed by the wicked SS. The cries of the bleeding, beaten victims, mixed with the shouting of their persecutors, pierced the heavens.

Suddenly an order was issued to sweep the square. Having swept once, they were made to do it again. Finally, after the garbage was neatly piled up in one place, they were ordered to scatter it and start anew. All that time they were screamed at and beaten cruelly. Blood was running out of their noses and mouths; their heads bruised and badly wounded. The sun burned overhead; the Fire of Hell.

We burst out crying as we watched our fathers and brothers being dragged so. We begged the murderers to let us finish the sweeping. I summoned up courage and approached the SS men. I played

on their conscience and so did the other women. Finally I managed to save my brother-in-law's father, the sixty-year old Mendel Honig. When I brought him home he fainted. We nursed him for quite a while until he regained consciousness. Similar incidents took place in every other house.

The operation ("action") continued till ten o'clock at night. The victims, when left alone, were afraid to return to their homes. Nobody knew what the next day would have in store. "Will Heaven have mercy upon them?" The men spent the night in hiding.

Later, such "actions" occurred more frequently, but people became used to it. They feared worse was still to come.

Rumors spread that in other places Jewish councils were established. The councils were named 'Judenrat' and acted as the representative body of the local Jewish population. One of their responsibilities was to supply young manpower for such odd jobs as sweeping the streets, shoveling snow, and towing the road. In addition to that they had to collect automobiles that had been struck in the middle of taxes enforced by the Nazis. Heavy responsibilities lay on the shoulders of the councilmen. Disobedience could cost one his head.

In many places there were Jews of despicable character who hastened to carry out the Germans' demands. They did not see, or refused to see that by doing so they would be forced to betray their own people.

The Judenrat in Radomysl was founded four months later than in other places. The exact date was Sunday, the 25th of January 1940. The head of the Gestapo in Mielec, the central town of our district, arrived in a winter-sleigh. Along with him came the representatives of the Jewish council there and two members of the council. They picked the members of the committee that was to act as a Judenrat; a body supervised by the Gestapo in Radomysl. The Mielec council had twelve members; Dr. Fink (deceased), a known lawyer, acted as chairman. One of the tasks was to form Judenrats in the district and undertake the responsibilities for their actions. Those Judenrats were in charge of the Jews living in neighboring villages.

Knowing how hard, dangerous and contemptible such jobs could be, the people of Radomysl tried to avoid them, but after being forced to accept they gave in. Thus, some very good and noble men found themselves appointed members of the Jewish council of Radomysl. They tried to do as much as they could for the benefit and protection of the town. Jeremiah Leibovitz, the son of Shmuel Leibovitz, was appointed chairman, Berish Eisland – treasurer, Anshel Tanenbaum – first vice-chairman, Melech Amsterdam second vice-chairman and Melech Gross, the son of Reuven Gross, – secretary. A few young people were included. It was rumored that members of the Jewish council were to be dismissed from forced camps; compulsory for all males from twelve to sixty years of age. Young people who wanted to escape the agony of forced-labor, applied for council-membership. They were stationed as policemen, messengers, etc. Next, an order was issued to the council to furnish a list of all Jewish males in Radomysl and the neighborhood. The purpose – to recruit manpower for local errands and labor-camps.

Since there weren't jobs in Radomysl, it was obvious that fathers, sole-supporters of families, as well as many sons, would have to be sent away to work in factories, earning as much as a pack of cigarettes' worth. Meanwhile, their families would have to put on sale all their possessions in order to survive.

Yet, that wasn't all. Besides regular labor-camps, where people slaved in factories earning next to nothing, there were punitive-camps. One such camp was located in our region. It was the camp in Postkow, near Dembica. People were horror-stricken at the mere mention of its name.

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Rzeszow



The city of Rzeszow (pre-war) rendering

(Day of Atonement), Jewish men still wearing their prayer shawls were driven from the city's synagogues towards the River Wislok, where many were either drowned or beaten to death.

In late September most synagogues were destroyed. Jews were forced to clean the streets*. Then the old Jewish cemetery*, located near the centre of the city, was demolished. Jews had to pull down the cemetery walls, break up all tombstones and pave the roads with the rubble. The emptied area served later as the Sammelplatz for the deportees.

The city was incorporated in the Generalgouvernement, and was later called Reichshof. In October a Judenrat was appointed, headed by Dr Kleinmann. The Ordnungsdienst, the Jewish police, was formed, initially numbering 25 functionaries and headed by a former Polish officer from Lodz, Gorelik.

On 26 October, an edict, issued by Hans Frank, required all Jewish males between the ages of 14 and 60 to register for work. Soon Jews were summoned for forced labour*. With effect from 1 December 1939, all Jews in the Generalgouvernement were ordered by Frank to wear on their right arm a white band at least 10 cm wide, bearing a Star of David. Jewish shops had to be marked* with the Jewish star.



A Jew with armband in Rzeszow

By the end of 1939, there were 10 forced labour camps in the Rzeszow region. The military airport to the north of the city became the main workplace for Jewish slave labourers in the region.

In May 1940 Jewish apartments were confiscated, and Jews were prohibited from using the city's main thoroughfares, Trzeciego Maja and Zamkowa Streets. Later the all night curfew was introduced. All Jewish men had to report at the Arbeitsamt.

In 1940, several hundred Jews from Rzeszow were sent to camps which had been established in Pustkow (near Debica), Jaroslaw and Lipie (near Nowy Sacz).

In the first days of January 1940, a new Kreishauptmann (District Leader) was appointed, SS-Sturmbannführer Dr Heinz Ehaus, who was known as a persecutor of both Jews and Poles in Nisko, where he served as a Landkommissar from 30 September 1939. The Kommissar of the town was Dr Hueller and the Gestapo chief was Hans Mack.

The Judenreferat (Jewish section) of the Gestapo was headed by Adolf Schuster; his deputies were Clemenz Burmester and Kurt Dannenberg.

The Gestapo appointed succeeding commandants of the Rzeszow ghetto – SS-Hauptscharführer Bacher, SS-Oberscharführer Kurt Schupke, (who had earlier served at KZ Buchenwald and who was later, in September 1944, appointed commandant of KZ Plasow), and SS-Unterscharführer Georg Oester.

In January 1940, Kleinmann and other members of the Judenrat were executed at the marketplace for failing to provide a sufficient number of forced labourers (according to the Ringelblum archive); Benno (Bernard) Kahana, Kleinmann's deputy, was appointed head of the new Judenrat. Between December 1939 and January 1940, 6,000–7,000 Jews were deported to Rzeszow from the Warthegau and Upper Silesia, among them 1,800 Jews from Lodz and 1,224 from Kalisz.

There were also 630 émigrés from Germany who had arrived in 1938 - 1939. In turn, several thousand Jews, both residents of the city and refugees, left Rzeszow and made their way to Warsaw, to Soviet-occupied Poland or to other places in the Generalgouvernement. Later, only a handful managed to cross the border legally. The deadline for the exchange of refugees between Germany and the Soviet Union was set for 15 May 1940.

An order of the RSHA dated 25 October 1940, banned all Jewish emigration from the Generalgouvernement,

By June 1940, the number of Jews in Rzeszow had decreased to 11,800, of whom 7,800 were pre-war



Location of Rzeszow

- Abraham Lewin
- Alfred Nossig
- Simon Wiesenthal
- Jacob Edelstein

residents of the city. At the same time, the number of Jews in the towns and villages of the Rzeszow region were (with the number of refugees in brackets):

Blazowa – 931 (139), Czudec 428 (33), Glogow M. – 806 (87), Kolbuszowa – 1,427 (700), Lancut – 900 (502), Niebylec – 570 (20), Ranizow – 620 (63), Sedziszow – 110 (81), Sokolow M. – 1,700 (186), Strzyzow – 1,238 (174), Tyczyn – 500 (140), Zolynia – 700 (103), Lezajsk – (500).

On 17 February 1941, the city was renamed Reichshof. Rzeszow became home to an important factory complex for the production of aircraft engines. Resettlement of Jews to the future ghetto began from June 1941. The ghetto area was surrounded by 3 m high wooden fences and walls. Entrances and gates remained open. A new Stadtkommissar was appointed, a Nazi fanatic, Albert Pavlu, who personally killed a number of Jews even before the deportations started. In December 1941, Jews had to hand over all furs* and fur collars.

The witness Samuel Isak Wilf, testified:

"The ghetto was not established until 10 January 1942. Posters appeared, stating that within 3 to 5 days all Jews had to move into the houses reserved for the ghetto. At that time only the Jews from Rzeszow lived in the ghetto, plus about 2,000 refugees from Lodz etc. The Jews from the surrounding area were left in peace for the time being."

Originally the ghetto was big, containing about 20% of the town. Nevertheless, some houses were really crowded, with up to 20 persons in one room. Within the wooden fence around the ghetto 3 gateways were set, guarded by Jewish and Polish police. Only those with a job outside the ghetto were entitled to leave. However ... could bring in some food, so that at first we did not starve."



Market in Rzeszow "Reichshof"

On 17 December 1941 a decree was issued, establishing a ghetto in Rzeszow, and on 10 January 1942 the ghetto area was closed off, imprisoning approximately 12,200 Jews, more than 3,000 of them refugees and people deported from western Poland. Overcrowding, starvation and lack of hygienic facilities resulted in the inevitable epidemics, in which hundreds died. In March 1942, the Gestapo murdered residents of two houses in the ghetto.

On 30 April 1942, the Gestapo murdered another 35 people in the ghetto. They were taken from their homes and shot. On 12 May, 250 Jews from the Rzeszow prison were taken to the Nowa Wies forest, shot, and buried.

The process of concentrating the Jewish population of the region started as early as March 1941. All the Jews from small villages were ordered to move to ghettos in the nearest towns. They had to leave behind almost all their property.

Jews moving to the Tyczyn ghetto were brutally beaten; all were robbed, a number killed. On 25-27 June, all Tyczyn Jews were resettled to the Rzeszow ghetto. Again, the march was accompanied by brutality and murders. A number of Tyczyn Jews were executed at the local Jewish cemetery. Jews living near Kolbuszowa were forced into the ghetto there in autumn 1941.

This ghetto was closed in February 1942. In Sokolow Malopolski the ghetto was formed in April 1942. At the time of the ghetto's liquidation in June 1942, 3,000 lived there. During the resettlement to Rzeszow 28 persons were killed. Most of the Jews from the ghetto in Glogow Malopolski were moved to Rzeszow in early July 1942. A number were executed at the Glogow forest (Rudna Forest), situated between Rzeszow and Glogow. Jews, concentrated in the Strzyzow ghetto, were resettled to Rzeszow on 26 April and 9 June, those from Blazowa on 26 June.

By the end of June 1942, all Jews from the smaller towns of Majdan Kolbuszowski, Czudec, Niebylec, and Staniszweska, together with some from Lancut, Sedziszow Malopolski, and from small villages near Rzeszow were forced into the Rzeszow ghetto. As a result, the population of the ghetto rose to almost 23,000.

In June 1942, the responsibility for the entire Jewish population was transferred from the administrative authorities to the Police and SD. At the beginning of July, the Germans imposed a penalty on the Rzeszow ghetto of 1,000,000 zlotys, to be paid by its inhabitants.

The witness Samuel Isak Wilf, testified:

"Afterwards the compulsory labour regulations were tightened up. Most Jews were forced to work. Around the same time came the "contributions". First 2, then another 3, then a further 7 million zlotys, and finally the delivery of all money. The Jews had to pay all tax arrears. Aryans who held claims against Jews were entitled to get paid without delay. Eventually the order came that all Jews from the surrounding area had to move into the town of Rzeszow. Many fled into the forests, but some 11,000 obeyed, so that the ghetto suddenly had some 24,000 inhabitants."



Yiddish map of Rzeszow and surrounding towns

Between 7 and 19 July 1942, the first deportation "Aktion" occurred. In the early morning of the 7 July, residents of the southern section of the ghetto had to gather in the Sammelplatz (the former Jewish cemetery). Here they underwent a selection. Those chosen for work, i.e. life, were given special seals on their work cards. A large detachment of police entered the ghetto. 2,000 mainly elderly and sick Jews were taken to the nearby Glogow forest, and shot there.

A group of Jews was sent to the "Flugmotorenwerk" at Lisia Gora. 4,000 Jews were marched to Staroniwa station, packed 100-120 people in each of the cattle cars and transported to Belzec, where they were gassed on arrival.

The march to the station on that day was especially brutal. People were herded, beaten with rifle butts and shot on the way, before the eyes of the local population (including German civilians, who officially protested afterwards). 236 people were shot* in the ghetto streets, 42 on the way to the station. Jews who buried the bodies at the Czekaj Jewish cemetery were also killed. Among the executioners were Pavlu and Mack. The next transport to Belzec left Staroniwa station on 10 July. After the selection at the Sammelplatz, 500 elderly people were taken to the Glogow forest for execution. Following the protests of local Germans, this time the march to the station was much less brutal.

Afterwards the Judenrat was obliged to pay for the transports. Two other transports departed from Staroniwa on 14 and 19 July. Sources differ in estimating the total number of those deported at approximately 18,000 to 21,000.

Since some 4,000 Jews were still living in the ghetto after the July deportations, it may be assumed that a figure of around 20,000 is accurate if this is to include the victims of the mass executions in the Glogow forest and those killed in the ghetto. At the time of deportations Kreishauptmann Dr Heinz Ehaus dedicated a wooden eagle, inscribed: "This eagle, the German sign of superiority and dignity, was put up to mark the liberation of the town of Reichshof of all Jews in the month of July 1942."



Cover to a post sent from the Rzeszow Judenrat

It was put up during the services of Sturmbannführer Dr Heinz Ehaus of the SS, first Kreishauptmann and chief of the NSDAP for the district of Reichshof." This eagle was placed in Rzeszow Castle, which housed the offices of the Kreishauptmann, a court and a prison.

The ghetto was subsequently reduced in size. At the end of July a large group of Jews from the Debica ghetto were brought to the Rzeszow Ghetto. On 7 August, a second "Aktion" took place, in the course of which approximately 1,000 women and children were taken to the Pelkinie forced-labour and transit camp near Jaroslaw in the Lvov district (there were already 10,000 Jews from Lezajsk, Lancut, Zolynia, Radymno and other places in this transit camp).

After a brief stay, they too were transported to Belzec.

On 25 October 1942, a group of 120 Jews from the liquidated Glogow Malopolski ghetto were sent to the Rzeszow Ghetto. A third Aktion was carried out on 15 November 1942. All Jews were gathered at the "Appellplatz" at Baldachowka Street, where a selection took place. A further 2,000 Jews were sent to their deaths in Belzec. During the course of this "Aktion", a large force of Security Police under the command of Paul Lehmann searched the ghetto for children. Any found were killed on the spot.

The witness Samuel Isak Wilf, testified:

"Around this time another action was planned. The Jewish employment agency had summoned all unemployed women and children unfit for work to be registered. A complete company of German police had been hiding in the agency."

The women and children were rounded up immediately, their property was taken from them and they were deported to Belzec. There were also 4 men among these people, three of whom were elderly and one a younger man named Holoschek who subsequently sent us a note from Belzec in which he wrote that he was working in hell.

At first we did not understand the message, but afterwards we heard that his job was to assist at the burning of corpses. We also heard that some of the women had to work on farms. Later we no longer received any messages. Probably all of these people were killed."

Following this last "Aktion" there were no more than 3,000 Jews left in the ghetto, which was then reduced still further in size and divided into two separate camps.



Jewish forced laborers from Rzeszow

The section east of Baldachowka Street, called "Camp A", became a Jüdisches Zwangsarbeitslager (Forced-Labour Camp for Jews). "Camp B", west of Baldachowka Street, housed the families of the forced labourers. Ghetto A was subordinated to the Krakow office of SSPF Scherner, not the Rzeszow police office.

The first commandant of the camp was SS-Hauptscharführer Bacher, a sadist. Men and women were separated and the camp was organized as a concentration camp. Some of the 2,000 prisoners (those with a "W" badge) worked outside of the camp for different German Army workshops.

There was also an "Ostbahn" Group, working under a certain Bremmer (or Brehmer). Some Jews laboured in the ghetto workshops under the command of Eintracht. Bacher served as the commandant until March 1943, when, after a conflict with the local Gestapo, he was transferred to the Szebnie camp. He was replaced by SS-Hauptscharführer Kurt Schupke.

The ghetto B, or "West Ghetto" (called "Schmelzghetto" / "Melting Ghetto"), was subordinated to the Rzeszow Gestapo and the Judenrat still functioned there. Family members of Ghetto A workers lived there as well as deported newcomers. On 15 December a group of 600 Jews from the liquidated Krosno Ghetto were transported to Rzeszow and on 14 December, a group of 170 prisoners from the Dukla work camp.

A witness, Hilde Huppert, who had been deported to Rzeszow, described what she had seen in February 1943:

"I stood at the window and saw 20 miserable figures wrapped in rags crouching in the lorry. I did not understand what it meant and asked a native of Rzeszow to explain it to me. That, he said was an incident which repeated itself every six weeks. A few weeks ago these people had left Rzeszow hale and hearty. They were sent to the equipment workshop at Stalowa Wola, not far from Rzeszow, from which they returned as living corpses."

They had to work 18 hours a day under violent ill treatment on a diet on which no one could live. When I asked why they brought such sick people here, he explained that the factory only acquired healthy bodies in exchange for the expended human material."

The 20 people were put to bed in a room in the ghetto, but two days later:

"Towards seven o'clock 6 Gestapo men arrived and asked to see the sick workers... In the sick room they ordered the people to get up and run into the square. Whoever could not run would be killed."

They chased the poor victims out of bed with blows of the whip and forced the ones who could hardly stand on their feet to run to and fro. The executioners found it so funny that they had to stop their mouths from laughing. Then they began to shoot at the runners... As we reached the West Ghetto we stumbled into puddles of blood... We saw corpses lying in front of our houses."



Jews being transferred from Rzeszow to Grodno

On 23 March 1943, more than 20 prisoners of the Ostbahn Group were executed. Soon the whole group was dissolved. At the same time a small group of prisoners from Biesiadka camp (a lumber works) returned to the ghetto. In subsequent months most prisoners of the ZAL (Ghetto A) in Rzeszow were transferred to other camps, mostly to Szebnie near Jaslo, and to Stalowa Wola.

On 23 July 1943, when the latter camp was evacuated to KL Plaszow, there were 416 prisoners, including 50 Jews from Rzeszow. An unknown number of Jews were sent to Debie sub-camp, where most probably all were killed. 110 Rzeszow prisoners were transported to Pustkow camp and, upon its liquidation, to Auschwitz and still further to KL Mauthausen and KL Gusen.

A group of Jews from the Flugmotorenwerk at Lisia Gora, among them 30 originating from the Rzeszow Ghetto, were evacuated to Plaszow.

Some 60 Jews from Huta Komorowska sub camp (a lumber works) were brought to Rzeszow and executed there. The rest of the Huta Komorowska workers were executed in the Glogow forest in the summer of 1943.



A line of Jews being deported from Rzeszow

On 4 September 1943, most inmates of Camp A were moved to the Szebnie forced-labour camp near Jaslo, 129 km southeast of Auschwitz. In early November, some 700 of these prisoners were taken to a forest near the village of Dobrucowa and shot. The last major group (circa 2,800 Jews) was transferred to Auschwitz on 3 November 1943, where most of them perished. On 6 November, 500 Jews were killed in Szebnie and upon the liquidation of the camp, on 30 December 1943, the last 84 Jews were transported to Plaszow along with 1,000 Poles. Those incarcerated in Camp B in Rzeszow were transported in November to Auschwitz-Birkenau and gassed.

One of the survivors of the 6 November Massacre in Szebnie was Lotka Goldberg, who managed to reach the Rzeszow Ghetto. She was greeted by the "liquidation party", headed by the chief of the Jüdischer Ordnungsdienst (Jewish police) Gorelik and camp commandant Schupke, who said that she deserved the Iron Cross First Class for her escape.

Gorelik tried to organise escapes, but he was caught by the Gestapo, tortured and killed. Lotka Goldberg was among a group of 36 Jews, who hid in a bunker dug within the ancient tunnels of Rzeszow Old Town. Only 6 of these fugitives survived when the bunker was destroyed. Lotka Goldberg was captured in another hiding place and transported to Plaszow.

On 14 January 1945, she marched from Plaszow to Auschwitz, finally arriving at the KL Bergen-Belsen, where she was liberated by the British Army. By July 1944, there were only about 600 prisoners left in Camp A. A few managed to escape and hide in nearby forests until the area was liberated by the Red Army the following month. The remaining prisoners in Camp A were transferred to Auschwitz, where most of them died.

The last commandant of the camp Flugmotorenwerk at Lisia Gora was Georg Oester, a man noted for his previous brutal behaviour in the ghetto. As the Red Army approached in the summer of 1944, the factory was dismantled and the machinery sent to Germany. However, before the prisoners could be liberated, they were transferred to Plaszow, where they once again encountered Schupke, this time as the commandant of the camp.

After about a week they were sent to KL Flossenbürg and from there to a factory at Orbis, near the French city of Mulhouse. Because the Allies were advancing from the West, the prisoners were taken to KL Sachsenhausen, where the group was broken up and sent to various camps in Germany.

By the war's end, of the original contingent of about 600 Rzeszow Jews, only a few dozen of them had survived. Schupke escorted the last group of 500 Plaszow Jews to Auschwitz, on 17 January 1945.

The 1944 edition of Baedeker's "Generalgouvernement Guidebook" describes Rzeszow, known in the mid-19th century as "Little Jerusalem", as a city "formerly dominated by numerous Jews."



Memorial Plaque to the victims of Rzeszow

Of 15,000 Rzeszow Jews, merely 100 survived the war; in Rzeszow itself, in hiding all over Poland, and in various camps. After the war an additional 600 Rzeszow Jews returned from the Soviet Union. Almost all of them subsequently left the city and the country. Schupke, commandant of the eastern ghetto (A), later Jüdisches Zwangsarbeitslager (ZAL) and the last commandant of the Plaszow camp, was sentenced to death by the Krakow District Court, and hanged on 27 November 1948.

Most of the other defendants accused of crimes in the Rzeszow area either received modest sentences or were acquitted.

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Amon Göth



Amon Göth on the Villa Balcony at Plaszow

Amon Leopold Göth was born on 11 December 1908 in Vienna. He was married twice, divorced in 1934 and again in 1944. He had two children.

He studied agriculture in Vienna until 1928, then from 1928 until 1939 he was employed by the company of 'Verlag für Militär und Fachliteratur' in Vienna.

In 1932 Göth joined the NSDAP, his party membership number 510764 and he joined the SS in 1940, his SS number was 43673.

On 5 March 1940 he was drafted into the Wehrmacht, with the rank of *Unterfeldwebel*. He was promoted in succession to *SS-Obersturmführer* in 1940 and *Untersturmführer* with the letter F denoting professional officer in war time, in 1941.

The final rank Göth obtained was *SS-Hauptsturmführer* in 1944, and he was a holder of the Cross of Merit with swords.

After serving at Cieszyn and the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle in Kattowice, Göth was transferred to Odilo Globocnik's staff in Lublin in June 1942, for participation in "*Judenumseidlung*". (Jewish Deportations).

In February 1943 he left Lublin after conflict with SS Major Hermann Hofle, Globocnik's Chief of Staff for Aktion Reinhard, and was transferred to Krakow with the rank of *SS-Unterscharführer*, as the Commandant of Plaszow Labour camp.

Göth's service in Krakow was from 11 February 1943 until 13 September 1944. It was clear that Göth had arrived in Krakow with a brief to destroy the remaining Jews of Krakow.



Plaszow Labour Camp

In order to wipe out the Jews of Krakow, the Germans chose a most symbolic site – the new Jewish cemetery on the outskirts of the city, in the suburb of Plaszow. There huts were constructed in desecration of the freshly-dug graves and a sign was hung up '*Arbeitslager*' (Labour Camp).

Prisoner Joseph Bau (Prisoner Number 69084) described Göth the commandant of Plaszow:

"A hideous and terrible monster who reached the height of more than two meters. He set the fear of death in people, terrified masses and accounted for much chattering of teeth. He ran the camp through extremes of cruelty that are beyond the comprehension of a compassionate mind – employing tortures which dispatched his victims to hell.

For even the slightest infraction of the rules he would rain blow after blow upon the face of the helpless offender, and would observe with satisfaction born of sadism, how the cheek of his victim would swell and turn blue, how the teeth would fall out and the eyes would fill with tears.

Anyone who was being whipped by him was forced to count in a loud voice, each stroke of the whip and if he made a mistake was forced to start counting over again. During interrogations, which were conducted in his office, he would set his dog on the accused, who was strung by his legs from a specially placed hook in the ceiling.

In the event of an escape from the camp, he would order the entire group from which the escapee had come, to form a row, would give the order to count ten and would, personally kill every tenth person.

At one morning parade, in the presence of all the prisoners he shot a Jew, because, as he complained, the man was too tall. Then as the man lay dying he urinated on him.

Once he caught a boy who was sick with diarrhoea and was unable to restrain himself. Göth forced him to eat all the excrement and then shot him."

Another prisoner Gena Turgel recalls, women prisoners were also treated very harshly by Göth:

"My sister Hela was in a group of women sitting, breaking tombstones into tiny pieces for building roads. Another older woman was working with Hela, when Göth appeared and told the older woman she was not doing it right. Göth showed her how to do it. When the older woman returned to her work- Göth shot her"

Göth played a leading role in the destruction of a number of Jewish Ghettos, including the Rzeszow Ghetto in 1942, where the Jews were deported to the death camp at Belzec, the Krakow ghetto on 13 – 14 March 1943, where he personally shot about 50 children and he supervised the liquidation of the Tarnow Ghetto in early September 1943 10,000 Jews were deported to Plaszow, and 4000 were killed.



Göth's Transfer Order



Amon Göth's dog Ralf

Prominent Jews

- Mordecai Anielewicz
- Simon Dubnow
- Sigmund Freud
- Mendel Grossman
- Chaim Kaplan
- Janusz Korczak
- Abraham Lewin
- Alfred Nossig
- Simon Wiesenthal
- Jacob Edelstein



Göth overseeing Jewish slave workers

During the liquidation of the Tarnow Ghetto, he shot a girl who asked him for a transfer to a different working group to be together with her fiancé.

Leon Leser, testified at Göth's trial:

"There was Ghetto 'A' for those working and Ghetto 'B' for those that were unemployed. Göth ordered everyone employed from Ghetto 'A' to go to Ghetto 'B' and assemble there in groups, according to their employer.

Every group had a board indicating the name of the employer. Then Göth selected a group of 300 persons as a Sauberungskolonne (clearing up column). The Jews assembled once again separately.

At that point a fiancé of one of the Jewish men approached Göth, her name was Batista, begging him to allow her to stay with her fiancé, who was remaining.

He refused, she begged him once again, he ordered her to turn around and fired into her head. She fell dead and after that he separated all the people again, he took out those that should go to Plaszow, and those that were left behind remained on the Magdeburger Square".

During the clearance of the Tarnow Ghetto Göth misappropriated Jewish property, furniture, furs, clothing, jewellery, tobacco and alcohol, which were later found by the Gestapo in storage, at Brunnlitz. Also at Brunnlitz was Göth's mistress Ruth Irene Kalder, also known as 'Majola'.

Göth also supervised the progressive liquidation of the forced labour camp in Szebnie near Jaslo. The liquidation began on 21 September 1943 with the killing of 700 Jewish prisoners who were driven in lorries to a forest in Tarnowiec, 3km from the camp, where they were shot. This 'aktion' was carried out by SS-Hauptscharführer Grzymek and supervised by the commandant Kellermann, acting on orders from Göth.



Göth on the way from court to prison

Göth also prepared under the leadership of Willi Haase, plans for the liquidation of ghettos in Bochnia, Rzeszow and Przemyśl.



Göth arrest photo

On 13 September 1944 Göth was arrested by the SS und Polizeigericht VI (Police Court) in Krakow for large-scale fraud.

Göth was also interrogated by the Sicherheitspolizei (Security Police) for giving information to the engineer Grunberg about the liquidation of the Krakow Ghetto. Grunberg a German was sympathetic to the Jews and closely associated with Stern, Pemper and Schindler. He passed the information on to Schindler, who in turn warned the ghetto leaders.

Göth was released from prison in January 1945, due to his diabetes and was moved to a sanatorium in Bad Tolz. There he was arrested by the Americans.

The Americans agreed to the request to extradite Göth to Poland following a request by the Polish authorities and Göth was tried before the Polish Supreme Court on charges of committing mass murder during the liquidations of the ghettos in Krakow and Tarnow and the camps at Plaszow and Szebnie.

He was sentenced to death in Krakow on 5 September 1946 and hung in the former camp at Plaszow on 13 September 1946, defiantly saluting Hitler.

Sources:

Amon Göth – Unpublished Document by Robin O'Neil

The Camp Men – French MacLean.

Former Camp Plaszow website – www.ckie.krakow.pl/oboz_plaszow

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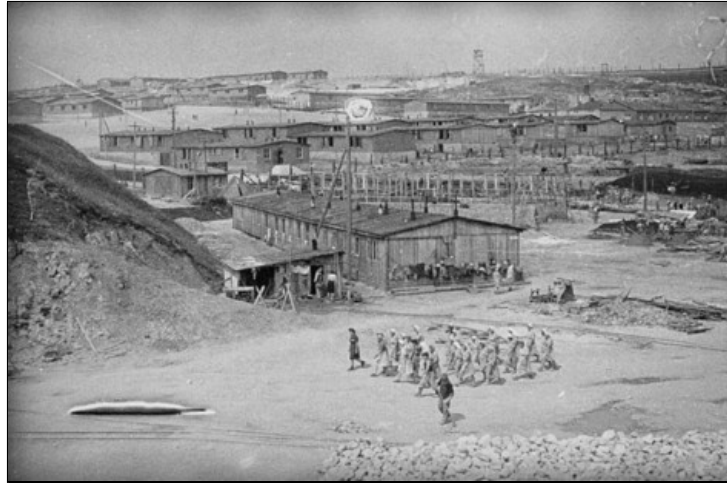
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Plaszow (Poland)



General view of the camp

The camp of Plaszow was originally designed to be a work camp. However, like many other Nazi camps, shortages of food existed, prisoners starved or were worked to death, or summarily shot for no reason. The camp had been opened in December 1942. More than 150,000 civilians were held prisoner in Plaszow.

One use of slave labor was to obliterate all trace of earlier mass murders. At Himmler's instigation, a series of special units, known collectively as Unit 10051, were forced to dig up the putrefied corpses of those slain, to burn them, and scatter the ashes. This work took nearly two years and involved exhuming more than two million corpses. At Plaszow, in January 1945 a Unit 10051 was forced to exhume 9,000 bodies from 11 mass graves.

Other units, working at different times at the murder sites, were themselves murdered once their work was done. The SS wanted no trace to survive either of their crimes, or of the slave laborers who were being forced to hide them.



Kommando in Plaszow.

The conditions of life in this camp were made dreadful by the SS commander of the camp Amon Goeth . A prisoner in Plaszow was very lucky if he could survive in this camp more than four weeks. After the liberation, commander Amon Goeth had been turned over to the Polish officials, tried, sentenced to death and hanged. The camp shown

in Spielberg's film "Schindler's List" is the exact description of Plaszow. Life for the inmates was usually short and miserable.

As the Russian forces advanced further and further westward, the Germans began the systematic evacuation of the slave labor camps in their path. From the camp at Plaszow, many hundreds were sent to Auschwitz, others westward to Mauthausen and Flossenburg on January 18th, 1945, the camp was evacuated by Death Marches, during which thousands of prisoners died from starvation, disease or were shot if they were too weak to walk.. The last prisoners were transferred to Germany on January 16th, 1945.

Mauthausen (Austria)

- **Location:** 20 km from the city of Linz, Austria.
- **Established:** August 8 1938.
- **Liberated:** May 5 1945 by the US 11th. armour division.
- **Estimated number of victims:** approximately 150.000.
- **Sub-camps:** 49 permanent sub-camps and approximately 10 camps that lasted for some weeks.
(cf. [The List of the Camps](#)).



The US forces found hundreds of dead in Mauthausen.

On August 8 1938, Himmler ordered a couple of hundred prisoners from the Dachau camp to be transported to the little town of Mauthausen just outside Linz. The plan was to build a new camp in order to supply slave labor for the Wiener Graben stone quarry. Until 1939, most of the prisoners were put to work building the camp and the living quarters for the SS. The main camp of Mauthausen consisted of 32 barracks surrounded by electrified barbed wire, high stone walls, and watch towers. Due to the immense number of prisoners that poured into the camp, Commandant Ziereis ordered that the fields to the north and west were to be ringed with wire. Here, Hungarian Jews and Russian soldiers, mostly, were kept in the open, all year around.



Survivors in the "Russian Camp"

Mauthausen was classified as a so-called "category three camp". This was the fiercest category, and for the prisoners it meant "Rückkehr unerwünscht" (return not desired) and "Vernichtung durch arbeit" (extermination by work).

In summer, wake up was at 4.45 a.m (5.15 in winter), and the working day ended at 7 p.m. This included two roll calls and the distribution of food rations. All the activity revolved around the Wiener Graben and the underground tunneling at the sub-camps of [Gusen](#) (I, II and III), [Melk](#) and [Ebensee](#). In the Wiener Graben the prisoners were divided into two groups; one that hacked into the granite and the other that carried the slabs up the 186 steep steps to the top of the quarry.



Survivors in the "Russian Camp".

An eyewitness report from Olga Wormser can perhaps give a hint of the life in the quarries: " Eighty-seven Dutch Jews were sent to the quarries separated from all the other prisoners. There they encountered the effeminate SS men known as "Hans" and "The blond Damsel". These two with pick handles in hand flailed into this pathetic group who were digging in the mountainside. By eleven-thirty, 47 of the 87 lay dead on the ground. They were butchered, one after another, before the eyes of fellow prisoners helpless to do anything. That afternoon, four more were killed. They were taken to the cliff top and told to fight. When two dropped to the rocks below, the victors would go free. Two dropped, but the victors were immediately pushed to join them."

Another killing method, favored by the SS during the winter season, was to gather a group of prisoners in the garage yard and order them to undress. A guard then sprayed water over the group which was left to freeze to death. This was quite effective in a region where the winter temperature usually was around minus 10 degrees Celsius.

If possible, the Gusen complex was considered as even a worse fate than Mauthausen. Here the death toll was so high that each barrack was divided in an "A" and "B" part ("Stube A, Stube B"). The sick, wounded or those too weak to work were hurled in the Stube B. Here, covered in their own excrement and those of others, they lay on the ground or upon others, wherever they were flung, and left to die. No food or water reached the Stube B.



Survivors found in a barrack in Mauthausen.

In the Ebensee and Melk sub-camps the situation was just as horrible. In mid-April 1945 when the whole Mauthausen complex was in total chaos due to the mass evacuation from other concentration camps, cases of cannibalism were reported. (Evelyn Le Chene, "Mauthausen, the history of a death Camp").

On May 5 1945, units of the American 11th Armor Division liberated the main Mauthausen camp. 15,000 bodies were buried in mass graves. Due to diseases and starvation, 3,000 prisoners died in the weeks that followed after the liberation.

From 1939 to 1945, more than 10,000 SS guards served in the Mauthausen complex. 818 of these are known by name. A couple of hundred were captured by the Americans. In the trial at Dachau on March 7, 1946, 58 were sentenced to death and three to life imprisonment. All plead not guilty. The commandant, Franz Ziereis, was shot by American soldiers in the camp while hiding dressed in civilian clothes.

Confession of Franz Ziereis, commander of Mauthausen Concentration Camp



Franz Ziereis

On May 23, 1945 SS Standartenfuehrer Ziereis, commander of the concentration camp Mauthausen, while trying to escape, was seriously wounded by shots from pursuing American soldiers. On May 24th, the dying, Ziereis was interrogated by the authorities. We have before us the record of the interrogation of Ziereis which is certified by the burgomaster Feichtinger and Edelbauer, commanding officer of the rural police in St. Valentin. In the fact of his imminent death Ziereis made a confession, the confession of the hangman...

"**M**y name is Franz Ziereis, born 1903 in Munich, where my mother and brothers and sisters are still living. I, myself, am not a wicked man and I have risen through work. I was a merchant by profession and, during the period of unemployment, I worked as a carpenter. In 1924 I joined the eleventh Bavarian Infantry Regiment. Later I was transferred to the training department and then to Mauthausen as commanding officer. The following posts and camps were under my command: Mauthausen, Gusen, Linz, Ebensee, Passau, Ternberg, Gross-Raming, Melk, Eisenerz, Beppern, Klagenfurt, Laibach, Loibl, Loiblpass, Heinkel, W. Wiener-Neustadt, Mittelber and Floridsdorf with approximately 81.000 inmates. The garrison of the camp Mauthausen numbered 5.000 SS men. The highest number of inmates in Mauthausen was 19.800. On the order of SS-Hauptsturmfuehrer Dr. Krebsbach a gas chamber was built in the form of a bathroom. The inmates were gassed in this gas chamber. All executions were carried out on the order of the Reichsfuehrer SS and Chief of the German Police Himmler, the SS Obergruppenfuehrer Kaltenbrunner, or the SS Gruppenfuehrer Mueller. Finally 800 inmates were gassed in Gusen I Block 31. I do not know the whereabouts of SS Oberscharfuehrer Jenschk; he murdered 700 inmates in Gusen.

Jenschk carried out the murders in the following manner: At an outside temperature of minus 12 degrees (centigrades) he made the inmates bath in water and then stand in the open stark naked until they died. Dr. Kiesewetter killed the inmates through benzine injections. SS Untersturmfuehrer Dr. Richter, while operating, on inmates regardless whether they were ill or healthy extirpated a piece of the brain and thus caused their death. This happened to about 1000 inmates. SS Obergruppenfuehrer Pohl sent weak and sick inmates into the woods and let them starve to death. The sick tried to stay alive by eating grass and bark but all died miserably of hunger. Pohl furthermore halved the food rations of the inmates and had all sick and weak inmates murdered through gas. This gas chamber was situated in Hartheim, ten kilometers distant from Linz. About 1.500.000 inmates were gassed in it. In Mauthausen all gassed inmates were reported as having died of natural causes.

(**Note:** The estimated number of inmates gassed in Hartheim is 30,000.)

Pohl sent me 6.000 women and children who, without any food and during very cold weather had been in transit in open freight cars for about ten days. I was ordered to send the children away. I believe that they all died. Thereupon I became very nervous. On orders from Berlin 2500 inmates from a transport from Auschwitz were bathed in hot water and during very cold weather had to stand in the open until they perished. Gauleiter Eigruber did not send any food, but ordered that 50% of the food for the inmates was to be handed out to the civilian population. Gluecks ordered that the inmates, occupied in the crematory, were to be relieved at least every three weeks and to be killed through shots in the neck, because they know too much. Furthermore it was ordered that all physicians and the nursing personnel was to be sent to an alleged labour camp in order to be killed.

The camp Lambrecht was liquidated. Pohl and several women gave large banquets and drinking parties in a villa. The inmates who worked in the villa were killed because they had seen too much, accused of theft and transported to Mauthausen with the order "destroy".

Himmler gave the order to load a 45 kilo stone on an inmate's back and make him run around with it until he fell dead. Himmler ordered us to establish a penal labor company according to this system. The inmates had to haul stones until they collapsed, then they were shot and their record was annotated "Trying to escape". Others were driven into a fence made of charged high-tension wire. Others were literally torn to pieces by the dog named "Lord" belonging to the camp commander Bachmeyer who sicced it on the inmates. On 30 April 33, inmates of the camp office were ordered to assemble the court yard. There they were shot like wild animals by SS Oberscharfuehrer Niedermeyer and the Gestapoagent Polaska. Altogether, as far as I know, 65,000 inmates were murdered in Mauthausen. In most cases, I myself took part in the executions.

Frequently I joined in the shooting with a small calibre weapon. SS men were trained on the rifle ranges where inmates were used targets. Reichsminister Himmler and SS Obergruppenfuehrer (Lt. General) Kaltenbrunner ordered me to kill all inmates if the frontlines approached Mauthausen. I had orders from Berlin to blow up Mauthausen and Gusen including all the inmates. All inmates were to be brought into the Gusen mine and blown up. The blasting was to be carried out by SS Obergruppenfuehrers Wolfram and Ackermann. Pohl issued the order "

Ziereis died shortly after the interrogation.

The above copy is a correct excerpt from the Austrian court files in the trial of Dr. Guido Schmidt et al as published in the Wiener Arbeiterzeitung from September 20, 1945.

Melk (Austria)

(sub-camp of [Mauthausen](#))

by **Mark Vadasz**

- **Location:** Aprox. 100 km to the east of Linz (Austria).
- **Established:** January 11, 1944.
- **Liberated:** May 5, 1945.
- **Estimated number of victims:** aprox. 10,000 (not counting the unknown number which perished in the tunnels).

Unfortunately little is known of the Melk sub-camp. Its main purpose was to provide forced labor for the different tunneling projects in the surrounding hills. The hills consisted of fine sand and quartz. Due to this, a vast number of prisoners were buried alive beneath cave-ins while working inside.

The inmates of the camp were of all nationalities. No single nationality was dominant. There were Poles, Hungarians, Yugoslavs, French, Italians and Czechs.

A gas chamber was built and well camouflaged. The chamber was actually better built and planned than that at Mauthausen. It was built of brick with double walls 25 cm. apart, the inner walls being tiled like a bathroom. The double walls acted as sound proofing so that the screams of the dying would not have been heard by passing prisoners or by the general public. Fortunately the war ended before the chamber became active.

Melk also had its own crematorium. Its tall smoke stack, pointing like a finger to the sky, was an obvious landmark. It covered a large area and its design was an improvement on those of Mauthausen, Gusen and Ebensee. Adjoining the crematorium was a mortuary which was well ventilated and well tiled.

The average number of prisoners in Melk was about 8.000, so it scarcely needed a gas chamber and crematorium of its own. The reason for the building was that there were plans to eventually turn Melk into an advanced extermination camp. In the summer months the crematorium accounted for eight to sixteen deaths per day, while in the winter of 1944-45, the number increased to between 20-30 a day.

The Commandant of Melk was Obersturmbannführer Julius Ludolf. It is also known that at some period the infamous Untersturmbannführer Streitwieser held command. The construction works were under the supervision of Obergruppenführer Kammler and Obersturmführer Schulz.

An interesting observation is that the Melk camp was established well within the bounds of a large Wehrmacht garrison. Thus it was exposed to passing soldiers and civilians. In fact it was quite possible to look down on the camp and adjoining army barracks from the link roads which were on a higher level. Even the crematorium entrance faced straight on to one of the main Wehrmacht roads. Nothing was done to conceal the stench and

atrocities and consequently the inhabitants and soldiers were totally aware of what was going on.

As the German forces withdrew on all fronts, there was increasing chaos in the areas which were still under nazi control. Even though the war was lost, the deportation trains and forced marches still went on. Melk was one of the camps that received an extreme number of these redeported prisoners. When the camp was finally liberated by the US troops on may 5, 1945, the SS guards had fled leaving the camp in an unbelievable situation. The dead and dying lay scattered all over the grounds and the final prisoner count showed a population of over 14.000.

Julius Ludolf was hanged in April 1947. Streitwieser, Kammler and Schulz managed to escape.

Ebensee (Austria)

(sub-camp of Mauthausen)

by Mark Vadasz

- **Location:** At the southern tip of the Traun lake aprox. 75 kilometers SW of Linz (Austria).
- **Established:** 18 November 1943
- **Liberated:** 9 May 1945
- **Estimated number of victims:** Aprox. 20.000



Crematories in Ebensee

Together with the Mauthausen sub-camp of Gusen, Ebensee is considered to be one of the most diabolic concentration camps ever built.

The construction of the sub-camp began in late 1943 and the first 1.000 prisoners arrived on 18 November 1943 from the main camp of Mauthausen and other Mauthausen sub-camps. The main purpose of Ebensee was to provide slave labour for the construction of the enormous underground tunnels in which armament works were to be housed.

After rising at 4:30 A.M. the prisoners dug away at the tunnels until 6 P.M. After some months work was done in shifts 24 hours a day. There was nearly no accomodation to protect the first batch of prisoners from the cold Austrian winter. Thus the death toll increased astronomically. Bodies were piled in heaps and every 3-4 days they were taken to the Mauthausen crematorium to be burned. Ebensee did not yet have its own crematorium. The dead were also piled inside the few huts that existed. The smell of the dead, combined with sickness, phlegmon, urine and faeces, was unbearable. The prisoners wore wooden clogs. When the clogs fell apart the prisoners had to go barefoot. Due to this total illtreatment combined with food allocations consisting of , in the morning: half a liter of ersatz coffee, at noon three-quarters of a liter of hot water containing potato peelings, in the evening 150 grams of bread, the death toll continued to rise. Soon lice infested the camp.

The camp was surrounded by a barbed wire fence, small towers with machine guns and shacks for the SS.

The Mauthausen commandant Franz Ziereis sent his most capable and vicious man to head the camp, Georg Bachmayer. After establishing his rule, he once again returned to Mauthausen and left the camp under the command of an Obersturmführer who proved to be totally deranged. The combination of these two became a reign of terror.



Survivors in Ebensee.

One of their favourite methods of torture was to tie a prisoner's arms behind him, with the hands side by side and thumb to thumb and then suspend him from a tree about eighteen inches off the ground. Bachmayer would then let his favourite dog, an Alsatian called "Lord", loose. The prisoner would be left in this unspeakable torture to die a slow and agonizing death.

In early 1944 a new commandant was appointed in Ebensee, Obersturmführer Otto Riemer. During his period the conditions deteriorated even further. He personally beat, shot and tortured prisoners daily. He openly offered extra cigarettes and leave to those sentries who could account for the largest number of deaths. If a sentry at the end of a day had not a sufficient number to his credit, he would knock off the cap of a prisoner and throw it into a forbidden area. When the prisoner went to retrieve it, he would be shot dead.

Riemer like Bachmayer was a great lover of wine and women, and he would often go to wild drinking parties with some of the younger SS. On one occasion, May 18 1944, he returned to camp after an all-night drinking session with 12 of his SS command. They entered the camp shooting wildly with their pistols and roaring with delight as panic stricken prisoners scurried out of their way. 15 prisoners died as a result of this display.

Eventually the camp expanded and prisoner blocks were established. The leader of block 19 was an extreme sadist. He would wait for his prisoners to return from the day's toil and then compel them to perform exhausting physical exercises far into the night. The following morning after a sleepless night, the men would be forced out to another full days work. Nearly all the members of his block died from exhaustion within ten days. By this system of elimination he had succeeded in killing in a most economical manner and was rewarded. When the sub-camp at Wels was constructed, he became the camp leader.

Ebensee also had its own crematorium. It was built apart from the other buildings with an enormous single chimney which rose high into the air.

Block 23 corresponded to the "Bahnhof" at Gusen or the "Russenlager" at Mauthausen. Here the dead and the living dead were flung together in big heaps. When the camp was at full strength, as many as 600 prisoners lay on the bare floor at one time.

When the war was coming to an end, the mass evacuation from other camps put tremendous pressure on the Mauthausen complex which was the last remaining camp in the area of Nazi power. The 25 Ebensee barracks were designed to hold 100 prisoners each. At the most they held 750 each. To this number one has to add the prisoners being kept in the tunnel systems and outside under the open sky. The crematorium was of course unable to keep pace with the deaths. Naked bodies lay stacked up outside the blocks and the crematorium itself. At the closing weeks of the war, the death rate exceeded 350 a day.

To reduce congestion, a ditch was dug outside the camp and the bodies were flung into the quicklime. On one day in april 1945, a record number of eighty bodies were removed from block 23 alone. Amongst the pile, feet were seen to be twitching. During this period, the inmate strength reached a new high of 18.000 prisoners.



Liberation of Ebensee on May 9th, 1945.

US troops liberated Ebensee on May 9, 1945. Around May 19, 1945 Bachmayer committed suicide after first shooting his family. Riemer managed to escape.

Third Reich in Ruins

Geoff Walden

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Ebensee, Austria

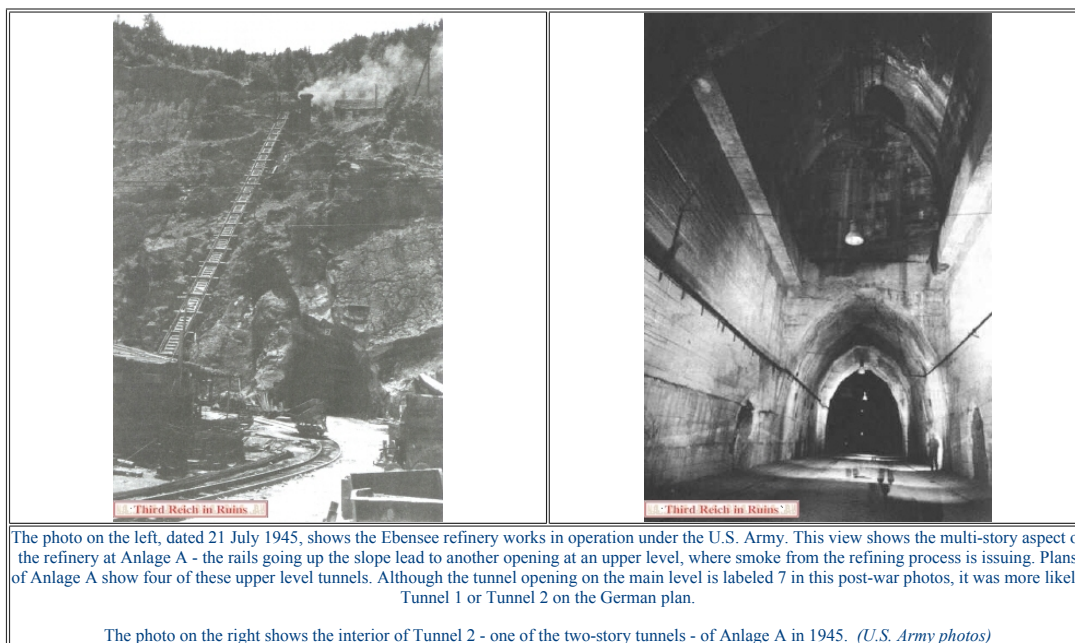
Underground Factory Projects "Dachs/Zement" and Concentration Camp Site

The hills near the Traunsee Lake in the Salzkammergut region of Austria (east of Salzburg) were chosen as the site for an underground tunnel system, begun in January 1944, under the codenames "Dachs" (Badger) and "Zement." The works were originally planned as an underground headquarters for the Luftwaffe, and then as a site for research and testing of the "Wasserfall" anti-aircraft rocket and the intercontinental "Amerika-Rakete," but these plans were never realized. The Ebensee works eventually were used for petroleum refining and the manufacture of motor parts for tanks and trucks, by the Steyr-Daimler-Puch works of Linz and the Nibelungenwerk factory of St. Valentin.

Two separate works were located in the Ebensee hills -- Anlage A was a large system closer to the lake and town, and Anlage B was a smaller system adjacent to the concentration camp, just to the southwest. Neither system was completely finished before the end of the war, but the tunnels in Anlage A were more extensive, and larger. At the end of the war, Anlage A contained a working petroleum refinery (which later produced gasoline for the U.S. Army). Only one or two of the tunnels of Anlage B, where tank and truck motor parts were made, reached any sort of completion; and none were as long as planned, nor were the side connecting passages finished.

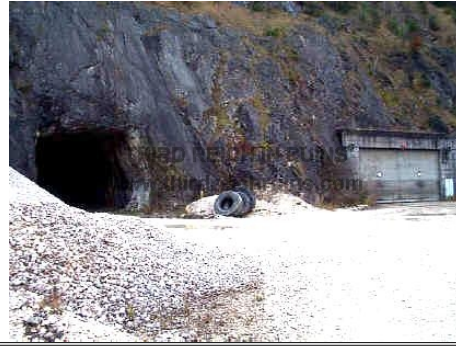
The work was performed by slave labor, with inmates brought from the [Mauthausen](#) camp. The Ebensee camp, adjacent to the Anlage B tunnels, has all but disappeared today, save for the main gate and a memorial on the site. Some 8200 inmates died at this camp before it was liberated on 6 May 1945 by the U.S. Army. Tunnel 5 of the Anlage B system is maintained today as a memorial.

[MapQuest map link to Ebensee](#)





Entrance to a tunnel of the Anlage A complex in 1945. The tunnel entrances were comparatively small, to protect against bomb blasts, and the tunnels themselves were taller and wider a short distance inside. Steel blast doors were planned for the entrances, but none were installed. (U.S. Army photo)



Similar view today (this may be the same tunnel entrance). The entrance to Tunnel 4 is open today, with the adjacent Tunnel 5 being used as a mine, with dual railroad tracks entering through the vertical sliding doors.



Interior of Tunnel 3 in Anlage A in 1945. This photo shows the partially finished nature of most of the tunnels. (U.S. Army photo)



Interior of one of the Anlage A tunnels today. This is Tunnel 5, the mine tunnel shown in the photo above. (from the [Ebensee/Zement webpage](http://www.ebensee/zement-ruinen.com/))

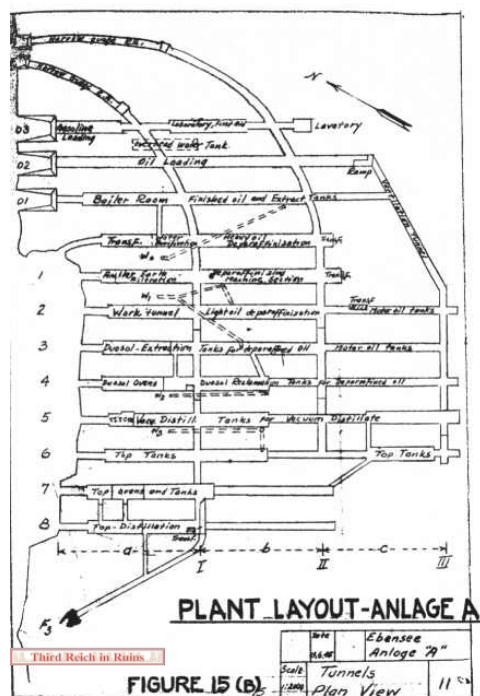




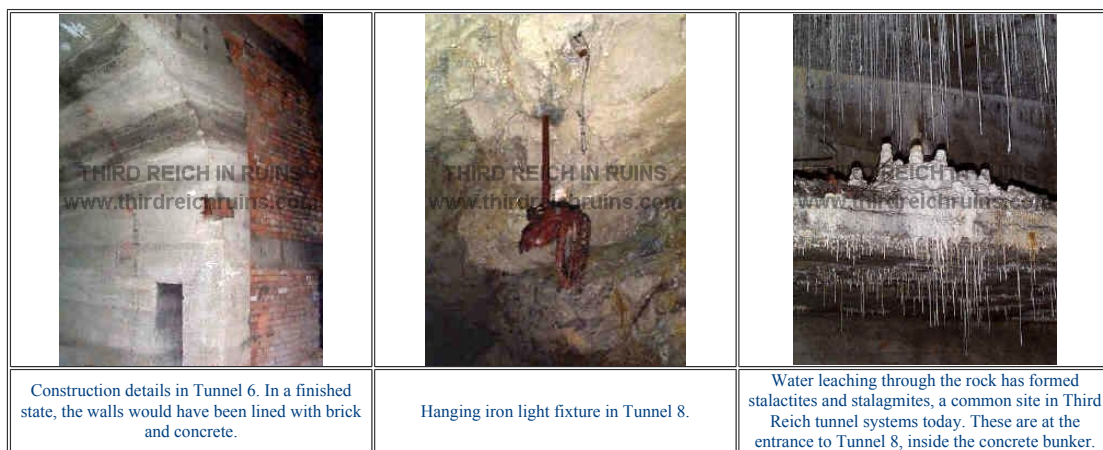
State of several of the Anlage A tunnel entrances today. Upper-left: Tunnel 01 - this entrance has been covered with rock and gravel; Upper-right: Tunnel 1 - a large entrance that is wide open; Lower-left: Tunnel 7 - closed by planking; Lower right: Tunnel 8 - the entrance to Tunnel 8 was originally covered by a large concrete bunker, with doors at either side. The original large doorway has been concreted up, with a small modern door inset; surprisingly, I found this door unlocked.



1945 views of the concrete bunker covering the entrance to Tunnel 8. Compare the view on the right to the modern view above. (from "German Underground Installations," Part I, Section II, CIOS, September 1945 (Imperial War Museum, London))

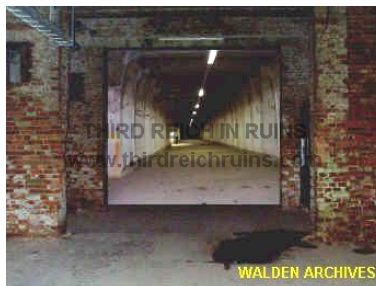


Plan of Anlage A. All published maps that I have seen of the Ebensee tunnel systems contain inaccuracies - some show tunnels that were planned but never started, others that were started but not finished, others that were finished but not to the configuration shown in the plans, etc. (redrawn from a plan in "German Underground Installations," Part 1, Section II, CIOS, September 1945 (Imperial War Museum, London))

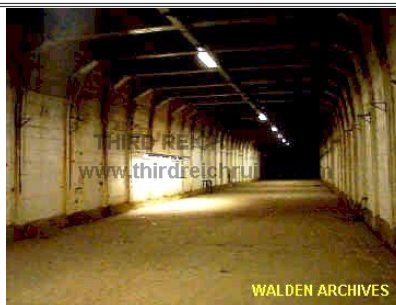


Entrance to a tunnel in the Anlage B section (this may be Tunnel 9; see below). *(U.S. Army photo)*

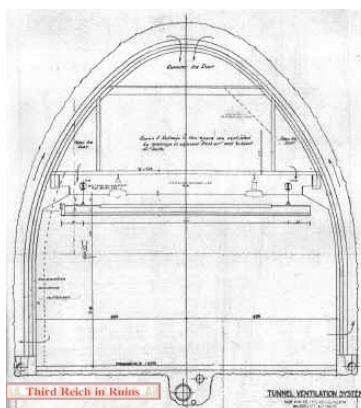
Entrance to Tunnel 5 in Anlage B today. This tunnel, the most complete of Anlage B, is maintained by the Verein Widerstandsmuseum in Ebensee, and is open to the public.



Entrance to Tunnel 5, Anlage B, 1945 and today. *(U.S. Army photo)*



Tunnel 5, Anlage B, then and now. The 1945 U.S. Army photo shows the machinery in place for the manufacture of tank and truck engine parts. There was actually a second story above the concrete roof, for offices (see sketch below). The completed part of Tunnel 5 was lined with pre-fab concrete sections, supporting lights and water and gas pipes.



This 1945 sketch of a tunnel cross-section shows the main floor, with its pre-fab concrete walls and ceiling, and the space for offices and shops above. *("German Underground Installations," Part I, Section II, CIOS, September 1945 (Imperial War Museum, London))*



An incomplete side passage of Tunnel 5 has mounts for the heavy machinery used in the manufacturing process.



Pre-cast concrete supports at the junction of the main tunnel and an incomplete side passage.



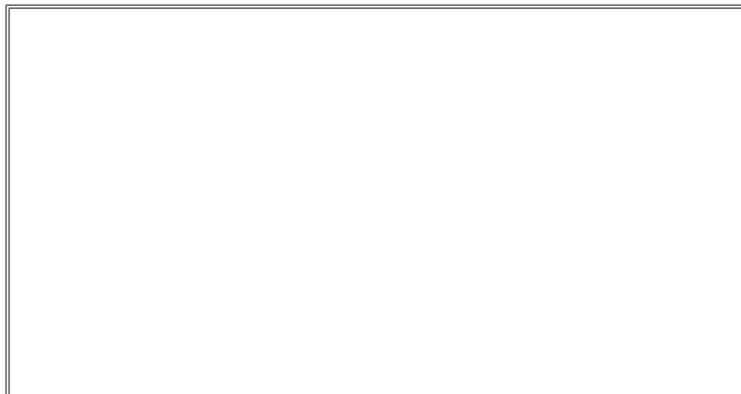
Tunnel 9 was an Anlage B work that was not finished.

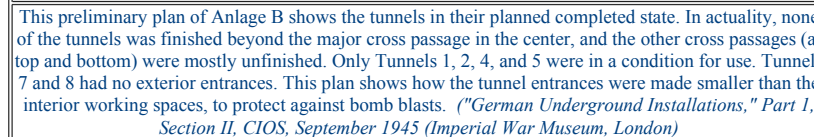


Inside Tunnel 9 - the main branch runs parallel to the other tunnels for about 100 meters, then dead-ends.



A short distance inside Tunnel 9, a side branch angles back toward the rest of the tunnels, but it was never completed. The work appears to have been hastily abandoned. This iron boring rod is still in place in one of the holes being drilled in the rock face for blasting explosives. I do not know the meaning of the "63A" paint marking, or even if it is actually a period marking.





Detailed info on the Ebensee sites -- <http://www.ebensee.org/>

Other concentration camp sites -- [Dachau](#), [Buchenwald](#), [Dora \(Nordhausen\)](#), [Sachsenhausen](#), [Flossenbürg](#), [S/III Jonastal](#), [Mauthausen](#) (includes Gusen)

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This page initially uploaded on 20 July 2000.

Ebensee - subcamp of Mauthausen



Gate into the Ebensee sub-camp

The photograph above was taken on May 6, 1945, after Ebensee, a sub-camp of the Mauthausen Concentration Camp, was liberated by soldiers in the 80th Division of the US Third Army on May 4th and 5th. The banner, written in French, reads "The French prisoners Salute the Allies." It was erected by the anti-Nazi resistance fighters who were imprisoned here after being captured and accused of doing acts of sabotage during the Nazi occupation of France.

The photograph below was erected by the German prisoners. It reads "We welcome our liberators." Among the German prisoners were some who were condemned criminals.



German prisoners at Ebensee were liberated by American soldiers

The prisoners at Ebensee worked in underground factories which manufactured Messerschmitt airplanes. German engineers and civilians also worked in these factories. The site was chosen because there were natural caves which could be enlarged into tunnels so that the munitions factories could be protected from Allied bombing raids.



American soldier Al Winters posed on May 8, 1945 at Ebensee

According to Martin Gilbert, the author of a book entitled "Holocaust," Ebensee was an "end destination" for Jewish prisoners who were evacuated from camps farther east as the Soviet Army advanced toward Germany. In the last months of the war, the Ebensee camp was seriously overcrowded with these exhausted prisoners, many of whom had just arrived in the weeks prior to the liberation. Gilbert wrote the following regarding the evacuations and the death marches:

Jews who had already survived the 'selections' in Birkenau, and work as slave laborers in factories, had now to survive the death marches. Throughout February and March [1945] columns of men, and crowded cattle trucks, converged on the long-existing concentration camps, now given a new task. These camps had been transformed into holding camps for the remnant of a destroyed people, men and women whose labor was still of some last-minute utility for a dying Reich, or whose emaciated bodies were to be left to languish in agony in one final camp.

According to Gilbert's book, a train loaded with 2,059 Jews arrived at Ebensee on March 3, 1945. They had survived the death camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau and had first been sent to the Gross Rosen concentration camp, then on to Ebensee. Forty-nine of the Jewish prisoners died on the train, and on their first day in the camp, 182 died during the disinfection procedure. New arrivals had to be disinfected to kill the body lice which spreads typhus. There was a typhus epidemic in Mauthausen and the sub-camps and, according to Martin Gilbert, 30,000 prisoners died in these camps in the last four months of the war.



Child survivors of Ebensee



Ebensee prisoners after the liberation of the camp



Prisoners too weak to eat were given sugar cubes

In the photograph of three Ebensee survivors above, note the shirt of another man in the background on the right. In place of buttons, his shirt is held together with ties. This shows how much the Nazi concentration camps had deteriorated as the war progressed. During the early days

of the camps, strict discipline was enforced and prisoners were punished for having a button missing. By the time the American liberators arrived, the prisoners were lucky to even have a shirt on their backs.

According to Martin Gilbert, the last death marches of the war began on May 1, 1945 as the American Army approached; prisoners from the main camp at Mauthausen and the sub-camps at Gusen and St. Valentin were marched to Gunskirchen and Ebensee. Hundreds of them died from exhaustion, or were shot because they couldn't keep up, or as they attempted to escape. When American troops in the 80th Infantry Division arrived on May 4, 1945, there were around 60,000 prisoners from 25 different countries at Ebensee.



Ebensee survivors pose for photo on May 7, 1945

In the photograph above, the prisoners all have shaved heads, a procedure which was used in all the Nazi concentration camps in an effort to control the lice which spreads typhus. Their heads were shaved first on the sides and the next time on the top. These prisoners have a regrowth of hair on the top, but have recently been shaved on the sides of their heads. The privileged Kapos were allowed to have a full growth of hair or a beard if they were bald.

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This page was last updated on December 5, 2008

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

**Interview with Thomas L. Ward
November 16, 1989
RG-50.030*0244**

Q: What were some of the stories?

A: Well, we sort of figured that the Jews were kept in concentration camp, you know, like Dachau, uh, uh, Auschwitz, and, uh, but these were all hearsay third party, fourth party things, and, uh, uh, we would hear that just like if our...our...uh...when we get mail, and they would. We would get...our mail would come up to us, you know what I mean, and "Did you hear about this? You know there's a concentration camp, you know, maybe up this way or 200 miles or 500 miles or something like that see." But it never phased me. I never...I never bothered about it. I never...I didn't...I was too concerned looking out for my own life, and everybody else was. When you are in war, you don't have to tell a man to clean his gun. He will take care of that. He don't want to be killed. And these are the things of life. And so but anyhow, we.. getting back to my story, we proceeded into Austria in the lower end where all the lakes were and the forests were and we were mostly on a...we were sort of like on a patrol unit, you know what I mean. Cause you can't fight too well in the forests, in the woods and everything. It's hard to go by, and these are facts. I know. I don't know what any other body said, but I know. So we went into this area, and we got there about 2 o'clock in the morning, and we started hearing moans, but the tanks always moved. You know what I mean, a little bit every bit, but we got into this area about 2 o'clock.

Q: What is the area you are speaking of?

A: Near the concentration camp I am speaking of. Am I too fast?

Q: Ebensee?

A: Ebensee. Yal. Ebensee, Austria. We were near there. We were on the outskirts of it. We didn't know it was Ebensee. I didn't know it at the time. So, uh, there were 3 of us, and the...and we started hearing these moans, and I said, "What is the world is that?" You know what I mean, and we heard human smells of like dead bodies. It's an odor that you won't forget. I don't care...there is no way that you will forget it. And I asked the one fellow, a Polish boy, I said, "Benny, what do you think we ought to do?" He said, "We can't see a thing. It's black out there." You know, the forests...you know, no lights or nothing. We'll just have to wait til sun-up to see what's going on out there. And I talked to another man, Ed Maser. I don't know where Ed is today. Uh...We did talk about it in Chicago in the in the 50s the last time I seen him. He was in Chicago. He was a New York man. I don't know

where he is today. I hope he is still living. Anyhow we went to...when sunup, we went and we seen this huge, huge...it looked like a fort...like the old time forts with all the logs up on them...they looked like telephone poles, that's how big they were now. I am not exaggerating that. But they were just lumber. I mean, they were just a tree cut down and put there. And I seen all of these...all of these watch towers...these towers around see...and I thought it was a prison at first. I would assume it was a prison, which it was, but not the one I thought. Then I told him...I says...I told Benny, I said, "There's no guards that are up in these towers," and that would be unusual. Everything looked like it was just...everybody skiddadled and ran or somewhere. So I said, "Let's take the tank." and we both decided we would take the tank and hit the gates. And the gates were loose, you know. They were really unlocked. These people were so out of it, you know, they didn't...they just didn't...they just didn't...I am talking about the inmates...they were just terrible. Well, when we opened it up, then we seen all of these people there, and they said and they would tell that they were happy to see us and everything and that, uh, we...it was hard. They asked for cigarettes. You don't...I can't...you can't visualize...you can't understand what these people went through.

Q: What did they look like?

A: Human...Let me see. I wanted to explain that. I am glad you asked that question. Their eyes were sunk in. Did you ever seen anybody with a cancer that was wasted to nothing? They were wasted to nothing. Absolutely nothing! They would bring these men into these salt mines. This was a salt mine. And they were...I would assume they were big men, and they would whittle them down to nothing, and they're.. They would not feed them. They would give them potato peelings, and, uh, that's what the inmates told us, and that, uh, they would have so much cubic, piece of bread, and the guards, who were ex-convicts of German...they were German ex-convicts ran these camps...I mean would...ran the barracks. They would come and ask how many people was there that the inmates would tell it, and we want half of that in the morning when roll call would come. And they...I went and I seen...from there, we proceeded...we tried to feed them, and we had to feed them under a guard, under an armed guard, a soup line, so they wouldn't get out and they wouldn't feed up their stomach. They didn't have...they were just bones. There was nothing to these people. It was terrible. And their stomach...they could only digest the soup. They couldn't...they didn't have nothing to digest. They didn't have no body, really. Anyhow, we got that...and if you would throw a cigarette down, 4 or 5 inmates would jump on that cigarette, a butt of a cigarette, to smoke that cigarette, see. And then we went into the barracks, and they were high and there were 2 men to each bunk. And then we proceeded and then they told us to go to the crematorium. 4 high and 2 to each bunk. The inmates asked us to come to the crematorium. We didn't know what we were going into. We were...they asked us, "Please come." I remember going into there...going to there, and then I seen one room. I would say there was 500 bodies stacked there. At least 500. I am not exaggerating. I took pictures of them in my album and if anybody sees this in St. Louis, I would like to refer to my album that I gave to the St. Louis Jewish Council on Ala Street in 1946 of January, when I was discharged out of the Army. But getting back to that, their tattoos was not on their arm. There were some on their arm. Displaced person! But these people in this...in this room...these bodies, I

should say, the tattoos were on their chest. And then we proceeded from that room to go to the crematorium, and they would put 2 people on a slab in this crematorium. They would have...they had operating tables there. They would take the gold out of their teeth...gold out of their teeth, and make rings out of them. And on the sign of the crematorium, it says, "My body would rather be burned than go into the ground, and they would push them into the crematorium to burn them, which they would be gone in 15 minutes or whatever it took them. Very quick! But on this thing, I know, I was trying to find a word for it last night and I found this word. Hitler wanted to exterminate the Jews and this is terrible, and God would not let that happen. I heard other stories. Not in this particular camp, in other camps down the years, that they would have the Jewish people go into a room and tell them that they were taking a shower...you probably heard this story...where they would gas them. And that's the God's honest truth. I know they did that.

Q: How long were you in Ebensee?

A: A month.

Q: A whole month?

A: Almost a month. A little less. In other words, I was attached to Major Kone, who was Judge Advocate Department when he came in for the pictures and everything and I was attached to his...I was relieved....I was taking pictures...which my pictures went to the Allied Supreme Headquarters, and went to the Nuremberg trial over that, and, uh, what I wanted to do...I wanted to leave a little legacy of this to remind the youngest Jewish children that it did happen because I witnessed it, and I was there. And their heritage is at stake and they should never forget, never forget, because 44 years ago as of this day I can look at it vividly that those persons...dead persons in that room...stacked... You don't forget those things. You cannot.

Q: Tell me, did the people...did you see the mass graves?

A: Oh, yes. We dug them. We didn't dig them. The...the, uh, people in Ebensee dug the graves, but I had...we got some...they had horse drawn carts open...wagons... There were no sides to it, and they put a lot of the buried bodies...put them on there to take them to there. And there was a hospital in Ebensee that came... However, they knew that there was a concentration camp there. They knew there was some kind of an inmate camp there because they knew it. They couldn't avoid it. You know what I mean. And however, they did come down to help. And there was a nun there that came to help and that period everything kind of got moved around a little bit there. You know what I mean.

Q: Did they volunteer to come in or did the commander?

A: We went to the hospital. And of course, they volunteered. That was technical...I am glad you asked that question. But we told them to come. We went to the hospital and told them

to come down there. But they came. They didn't object to it. It was sort of a volunteer I guess you would say, but at our request. And then the, the inmates caught one of the officers who was at that camp about a week later I guess, and they turned him over to the military authority and one guard they caught and they spread eagled him and stoned him to death, on the ground, so he must have been a...must have been a very bad man of some sort. And the nuns came there. Then they told us that there was another camp. Am I getting to far?

Q: No. Maybe before we get to the other camp... The towns people...did they deny what was going on there? Although they knew it was a camp.

A: That was a good question. I am glad you asked that. They knew it was camp. They did...let's put it they didn't want to be bothered. uh, They knew that that was a concentration...they knew that the Jews were in that camp. You couldn't help from knowing it. You take a place that large and working in the salt mines and seeing some of them people, they would have to go out. They would have to go to them salt mines under guard or something. You couldn't help from knowing it. But it seems they just didn't...they took it for granted that that was it. And I tell you another little thing that I would as of this day, I...I don't know for sure...I honestly can't say this for sure, but I could have swore to this day that I seen one of the biggest officials near that camp. He was a young officer. And I don't want to get into that, because I don't know for sure. But faces don't change. You might get old, but faces don't change in years, and they...they said he knew a lot of things were going on in Austria, and to this day, I believe he did know it because I am sure he was...he was it was just there. I just know it, but I don't want to get into...towns brought into see the burial?

A: The towns people were brought in to made help bury the people, to dig, help dig the graves, uh, and bury them where they're were mass, which they did. But the most important thing, that hospital was a very. It's very grateful that that hospital was there, because they could help do the things that were supposed to be done.

Q: What was the reaction of the towns-people when they saw upfront the people?

A: Amazed. And...uh... They knew the camp was there. I don't know if they knew the crematoriums were there. I don't know. I would doubt that because that was in a secluded...this was a big camp. This was not a small camp. And...but some people would have to know. Some people worked there...in the town...you know what I mean. They would have to know. You can't get away from reality. There's no way in the world you can get away from reality. And whatever it is, they knew there were Jews in the camp. They knew that they were Jews because of the uniforms...of the costumes they had, and they had no use for a Jew. I don't...Hitler never had no use for a Jew. I don't...I hate to say it that way, but he wanted them...as I got back to the one word, he wanted to exterminate them all, and God won't let him do that.

☐ **“REMEMBERING
EBENSEE 1945**
Robert B. Persinger, May 6th 2005



It is an honor to be invited back here 60 years later representing the 3rd Cavalry Group of WWII. It is hard for me to realize that these nice homes were built on these grounds that 60 years ago supported up to 18,000 prisoners, filthy barracks and a crematorium with electrified barber wire fence around it and the only entrance was through the archway which still stands today. But in no way erases the horrible sights that we saw back then, which is stored in our memories. Those memories will never to be erased.

Our tank platoon arrived in Ebensee on Sunday May 6th, 1945, and we heard of a concentration camp. At that time I was a platoon sergeant and tank commander. My platoon leader Lieutenant Garbowit directed me with my crew to proceed to the gates along with Sergeant Dick Pomante and his tank and crew. As we approached on the gravel road to the camp we saw masses of human beings that appeared almost like ghosts standing in mud and filth up to their ankles behind the high wire fence. They were dressed in their filthy striped clothes and some in partial clothing, barely covering their bodies. They appeared so thin and sickly, it was evident that they were starving. Their bodies were just skin and bones. We stopped our tank and observed for a period of time trying to decide what we would do with the mass of prisoners surrounding our tanks. Both tank crews were hesitant to accept or make contact with these poor starving individuals. None of us had ever seen human beings in this terrible situation before. We started to toss rations and energy bars to them until our supply was depleted. In all of the confusion I lit a cigarette

and heard someone say 'that it had been a long time since he smoked a Lucky Strike'. I asked him to climb up on the tank so I could give him one. This man spoke English so I radioed that information to my Lieutenant and he told me that we should keep him available for future questioning. This prisoner wanted us to walk around the camp area. At first we refused because we thought we had seen enough and really didn't want to dismount and wade through the quagmire of mud and around all of the dead bodies. Besides that the stench of all of the dead bodies made it almost unbearable. He did convince us we needed to see more than we could see from the tank. We were taken to the barracks area, the kitchen which was bare, and then to the crematorium where there were stacks of bodies piled like cordwood one on top of the other completely around the inside walls of the crematorium. If you weren't sick by now you would be before you exited from there. At the same time you wanted to cry. We had seen terrible sights from combat across Europe but what we were observing was a climax to the things human beings do to their fellow man. It was beyond anyone's imagination that such horrible crimes could be committed. We returned to the village of Ebensee, to the Post Hotel where our tank company stayed, and started immediately making plans as to how we could get food to at least feed a few of them until our army units could arrive to bring food and hospital units for medical help which was so desperately needed. It was decided to start searching the complete area for food products to make a soup by using the large kettles that they had in their kitchen. We obtained potatoes, cabbage and other vegetables that were available from miles around. All of the bakeries were asked for bread. As an example Sergeant Pomante used his tank to convince an Ebensee baker to release all of his bakery goods. We finally got the soup ready but realized that somehow we had to control the serving. It was decided to fire live ammunition over their heads from our tanks when they started to overrun the soup line. This brought their attention and did provide control. The servings started and some gulped it down so fast that many died from the reaction from it. Their stomachs could not accept the rich hot soup.

The army medical hospitals arrived quickly along with other army quartermaster units to provide services to get the prisoners on the road to recovery. We stayed with them and helped for two weeks to nourish them before we received orders to return to the states and prepare for invading Japan with General Patton and his Third Army.

I want to tell you a story about the man to whom I gave a cigarette. His name is Max Garcia a member of the committee planning this event. In 1987, forty-two years after our entry into Ebensee I met up with him at our annual veterans reunion in El Paso, Texas, and I still keep in touch with him. He has attended many of our annual reunions. He became acquainted with our group and took charge of our return to Europe to

trace our wartime steps from Normandy to here in May 1990. His late wife, Pat, was adopted by our veterans and we knew her as our sister. They, along with a number of ex-prisoners, have become close friends of mine and I am very grateful for all those wonderful people who have lived through 'Hell on Earth'. I will never forget them as I stated earlier, they are glued with my memories of this terrible place as I knew it. I thank you once more for the invitation to return here and pass along some of my memories.



Memorial



The Ebensee Memorial today



The barracks of the camp were destroyed soon after the liberation. Visiting the former area of the camp you can only see the former entrance gate of the camp. The victims' cemetery is also located in this area, at the place where one of the mass graves secretly, created by the SS shortly before the liberation of the camp was found. The gallery systems still exist and in one of the huge tunnels a bilingual exhibition (German/English) gives a detailed description of the camp's history. The remains of a staircase (called "Löwengang") can also be visited.



Opening times of the exhibition in the gallery:



1st May – 15th June

Saturday & Sunday: 10 am - 5 pm

16th June – 15th September

Tuesday – Sunday: 10 am - 5 pm

(Closed on Mondays)

16th – 30th September

Saturday & Sunday: 10 am – 5 pm

Entrance fees

Adults:	3 Euro
Students/Groups:	2 Euro
Children:	free

Guided Tours

Guided tours through the area of the former concentration camp are offered upon prior arrangement. You will be accompanied by experts or a former Polish prisoner upon request. We ask for your understanding that guided tours for individuals are only possible in exceptional cases. During the opening hours of the exhibition an expert is at your disposal for information and guided tours through the exhibition in the tunnel.

How to reach Ebensee Concentration Camp Memorial

Coming from Bad Ischl or Gmunden on the National Route B145 you take the exit RINDBACH and then you follow the brown coloured signs saying “KZ-Gedenkstätte”. There is a parking space in front of the cemetery. From there you can reach the exhibition in 3 minutes. (Don’t forget warm clothes, it is only 8°C in the gallery!) Literature: Brochures (70 pages) of the concentration camp Ebensee are available in German and English. We also can offer you a catalogue of the exhibition in German, English, French and Italian.

History of the Ebensee concentration camp cemetery

During the weeks following the liberation of the Ebensee concentration camp on 6 May 1945, the first cemetery was erected at a distance of two kilometres from the camp upon order by US Army authorities. About 900 victims who had been discovered at different places on the whole camp site at the time of the liberation were buried in individual graves at the cemetery.



Inauguration of the Lepetit memorial, 4 May 1948 (Collection Hilda Lepetit)

Three years later, the so-called Lepetit memorial was unveiled in the centre of today's cemetery. Hilda Lepetit, a native of Milan, had initiated the erection of the memorial at the site of a mass grave which had been built by the SS in the night from 4 May to 5 May 1945. Her husband is assumed to be one of the 1000 victims buried in the mass grave never opened.

In 1952, a French ministerial commission carried out exhumation and relocation works at various places, with the target being the creation of a collective cemetery for concentration camp victims in Ebensee.

At the abandoned original cemetery 842 corpses were exhumed and subsequently buried again individually left and right of the Lepetit memorial. Only about one third of the deceased persons could be identified. (Burial site plans in front of the burial places).

The relocations works also included the relocation of another mass grave with 1179 victims, which the SS also had erected not far from here immediately before the concentration camp was liberated. Upon opening the mass grave the commission in charge detected 197 legible badges with the prisoners' numbers, thus it was possible to associate these with the respective names of the camp inmates in most of the cases. Individual identification of the human remains was impossible in any of the cases.

The mass grave was re-built at the back of the Lepetit memorial. In addition, 11 deceased persons from the original cemetery and 151 corpses which had been transferred to Ebensee from Hörsching were buried at this place, i.e., a total of 1341 victims were buried here.



Camp cemetery, 1954 (Collection Hilda Lepetit)

■ ■ Relocation of concentration camp victims from other places

Originally, prisoners who had died immediately after the liberation in one of the neighbouring hospitals as a consequence of the incarceration were buried at the respective communal cemeteries. In the course of the commission's work these victims were exhumed, in few cases repatriated, in most of the cases they were buried at the cemetery of the Ebensee concentration camp.

Exhumations were carried out at the following places:

- Bad Goisern: 86 victims, 1 victim transferred to Belgium, 85 victims transferred to Ebensee (May 1951)
- St. Wolfgang: 33 victims transferred to Ebensee (September 1951).
- Bad Ischl: 54 of the 66 exhumed concentration camp victims transferred to Ebensee (May 1952)
- Sankt Konrad: 4 victims transferred to Ebensee. One victim from Aurachkirchen was transferred to Ebensee and buried here.

■ ■ Victims from other concentration camps

235 victims (above all from the camp at Gunskirchen) who had died in Hörsching after the liberation were buried in the mass grave and at the burial sites left and right of it. 3 victims from the subsidiary camp in St. Valentin were transferred to Ebensee. 190 urns were relocated from Steyr. These include victims from the concentration camps Gusen and Mauthausen, who were cremated largely in 1941 and 1942 in the municipal crematorium in Steyr. 52 victims from the Mauthausen concentration camp, who lost their lives after the camp's liberation in a hospital in Schönau, were exhumed in December 1953 and buried in Ebensee. All victims, 51 Hungarian Jews and a Russian, could be identified. Furthermore, 19 victims (4 urns), thereof 5 could be identified, were transferred from the cemetery in Linz-St. Martin to the cemetery of the Ebensee concentration camp. Finally, in October 1960, 10 victims were relocated from the cemetery in Altaussee and 6 from Gallsbach to Ebensee.

2 victims were exhumed again at the end of the 1950s and transferred to

Salzburg, 1 victim was repatriated to Israel.
All in all, 1343 victims were buried in individual graves as well as about 2341 victims in the two mass graves at this cemetery. The location of any ash pits has not been clarified up to the current date. These are said to have been created - according to the memories of surviving camp inmates - as a result of the cremation of thousands of victims in the camp crematorium.



Name **KRAMER**

First Name **Markus**

Born **8.2.1924**

Occupation —

In C. C.	Plaszow	No.	436
--	Mauthausen		85215
--	Melk	--	--
--	Ebensee	--	--

Tattooed No. or Sign.: **/**

is a member of the Selfaid of the Jewish former
Concentration Camp Inmates in Upper Austria.

All authorities are requested to grant assistance
to the above named if necessary.

Thomas Masher
Signature

Linz, *March 7th* 1947.

W. G. S. J.
General Secretary

Th. Masher
President

DISPLACED PERSON IDENTITY CARD

CERTIFICATE

LAND UPPER AUSTRIA AREA COMMAND
DISPLACED PERSONS POLICE

SCHOOL
EBELSBERG, AUSTRIA

27 February 1948

This is to certify that Markus Krämer successfully
completed a course in police training conducted at Ebelsberg, Austria

from 22 February 1948

to 27 February 1948

W. d. C. M. M. - 27 Feb. 1948
Chief, Displaced Persons Section

27 Feb. 1948

John C. Boyle Capt. Inf.
School Commandant

P. C. I. T.
St. A. Vienna
DIRECTOR
AREA TEAM N
LINZ, AUSTRIA

POLICE TRAINING CERTIFICATE

COMMUNITY BINDERMICHL

Name: Kröner Markus.

Home: Linz Bindermichl.

Place: Sergant

Born: 8. 2. 1924

This is to certify that

Kröner Markus.

has authority to enforce law and order at Binder-
michl as laid down by Commander.

Signed by Commander:

Chief of Police
Krenler Max

KOMITEE BINDERMICHL

Obige Kommandantur bescheinigt, daß

Kröner Markus.

als Polizei-Sergant

Dienstführer
Dienst leistet.

Bindermichl 1948/49



**Straßenbahn-
Monatskarte**

15425

Herrn Markus
für Frau K r ä m e r
Fräul. L i n z / Donau

Ramsauerstr. 51.

ERMÄSSIGTE



KARTE

— Linzer Elektrizitäts- und Straßenbahn-Aktiengesellschaft —

Nr. 15425	DEZEMBER 1948	S 18.-



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267. Statement by the President Concerning the Transportation of Refugees to the United States

December 19, 1946

DURING the Christmas season a year ago, on December 22, 1945, I issued a directive to a number of Executive agencies designed to facilitate the immigration of refugees and displaced persons up to the full limit provided by the immigration law. 1

1 See 1945 volume, this series, p. 572.

Up to October 21, 1946, only 4,767 persons were provided for under these arrangements. At the present time, foreseeable sailings in 1946 will provide for only 683 more persons.

These delays have caused a serious situation among displaced persons who hold immigration visas for the United States and are waiting for shipping. At Bremerhaven, for example, 2100 persons, including 177 orphaned children, are crowded into an embarkation center designed to accommodate only transients.

Mindful of the bleak Christmas ahead for these people who have already suffered so much, I have taken up this matter with the Maritime Commission and can hold out hope of early improvement.

The S.S. Ernie Pyle will sail from New York on December 20, and will arrive in Bremerhaven on New Year's Day. The S.S. Marine Marlin will sail from New York on December 27 and will arrive in Bremerhaven on January 6, 1947. The S.S. Marine Flasher will arrive in Bremerhaven on January 8.

In addition, the S.S. Marine Falcon, now in the Pacific, will arrive in Bremerhaven during the latter part of January.

Each of these vessels has facilities to transport approximately 900 passengers. They will be kept in this service until the situation has been fully relieved.

Provided courtesy of [The American Presidency Project](#). John Woolley and Gerhard Peters. University of California, Santa Barbara.

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Fax: 816-268-8295.



THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

ORIGINAL
TO BE GIVEN TO
THE PERSON NATURALIZED

CERTIFICATE OF



NATURALIZATION

No. 6984278

Petition No. 486582

Personal description of holder as of date of naturalization: Date of birth February 8, 1924; sex Male; complexion Fair; color of eyes Brown; color of hair Black; height 5 feet 9 inches; weight 130 pounds; visible distinctive marks None; Marital status Married; former nationality Polish.

I certify that the description above given is true, and that the photograph affixed hereto is a likeness of me.



mark kramer

(Complete and true signature of holder)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA } S.S.
EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK }

Be it known, that at a term of the District Court of The United States held pursuant to law at Brooklyn on March 11, 1952 the Court having found that

MARK KRAMER

then residing at 2577 East 21st Street, Brooklyn, N.Y. intends to reside permanently in the United States (when so required by the Naturalization Laws of the United States), had in all other respects complied with the applicable provisions of such naturalization laws, and was entitled to be admitted to citizenship, thereupon ordered that such person be and (s)he was admitted as a citizen of the United States of America.

In testimony whereof the seal of the court is hereunto affixed this 11th day of March in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and fifty two and of our Independence the one hundred and seventy sixth



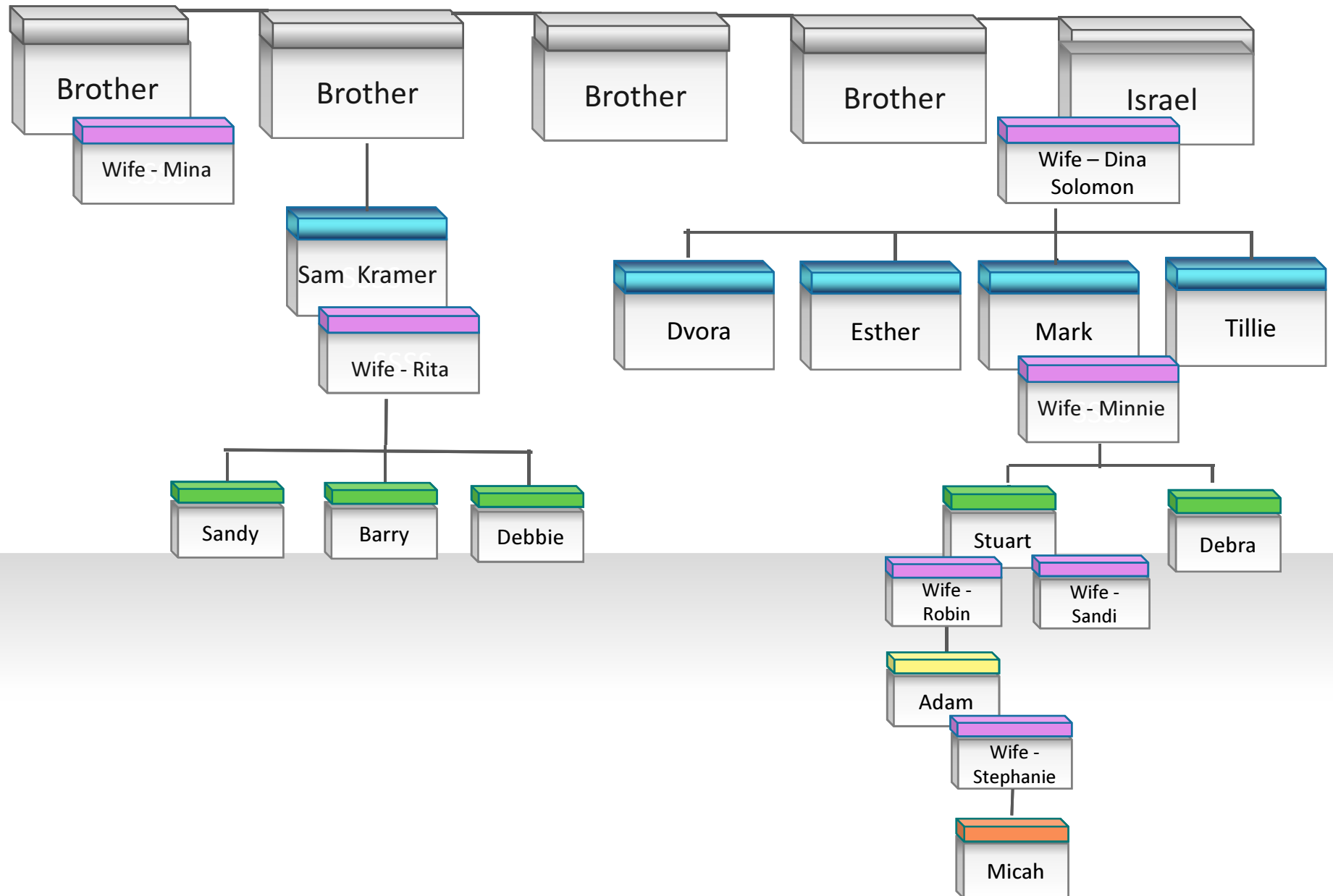
mark kramer
Seal

It is a violation of the U. S. Code (and punishable as such) to copy, print, photograph, or otherwise illegally use this certificate.

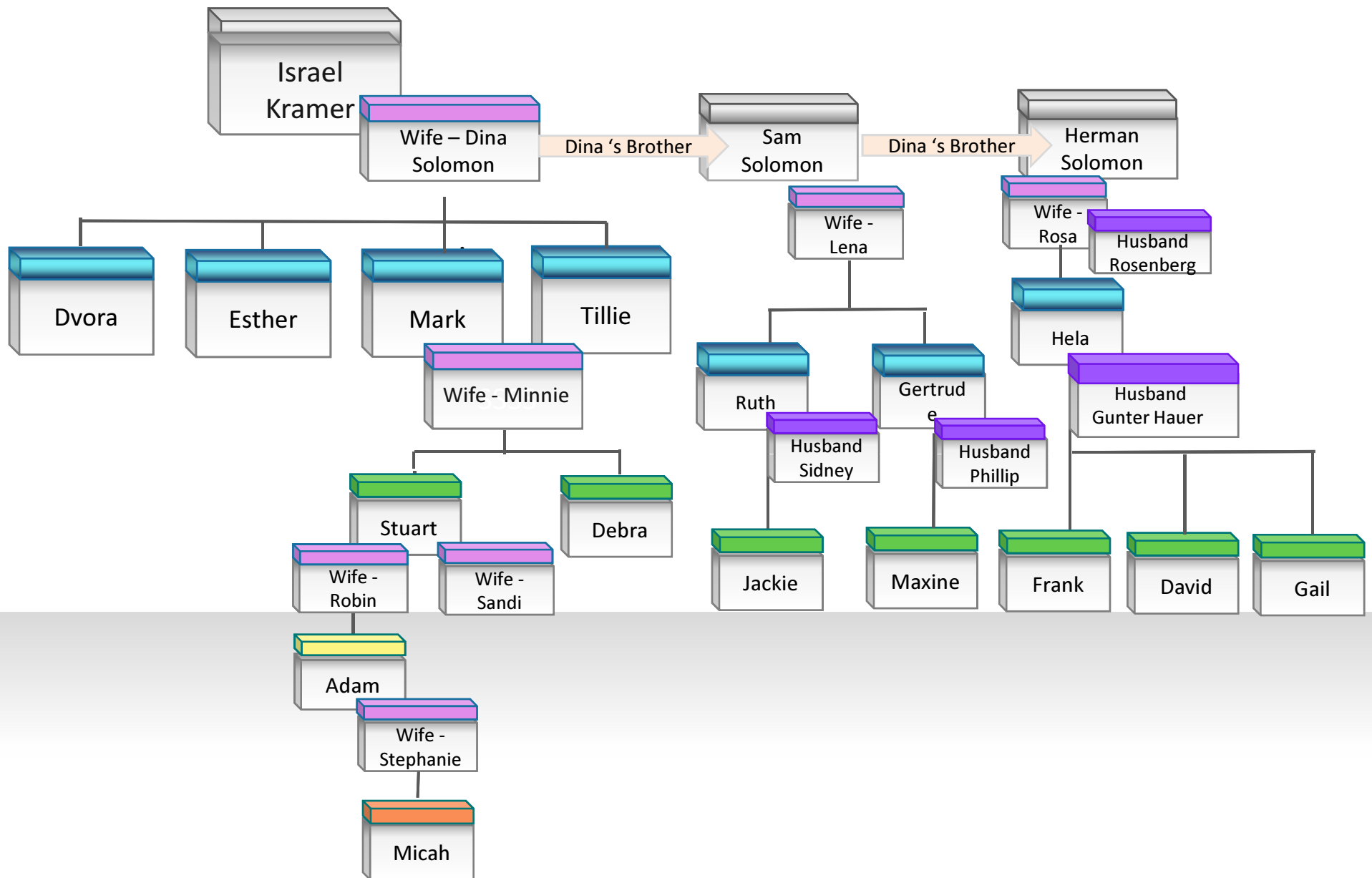
Clerk of the U. S. District Court.
By Deputy Clerk.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

KRAMER FAMILY



KRAMER / SOLOMON FAMILY



FAMILY TREE NOTES

Mina Kramer: In 1992 Mark and Minnie visited her in Israel. She thought Mark and Sam had died during the war.

Sam & Lena Solomon: Sponsored Mark to enter the U.S. in 1949.

Rosa Solomon: Was married to Herman Solomon and had a daughter Hela. Rosa fled to Equador where she remarried a Mr. Rosenberg.

Hela Solomon: Daughter of Rosa and Herman Solomon. She fled to Shanghai and met her husband Gunther Hauer. She eventually came to the U.S. and in the early 1950's she brought her mother Rosa (widowed again) to the U.S.. They all moved to Philadelphia.

Nur von der Entschädigungsbehörde auszufüllen:

(Eingangsstempel)

Vor Ausfüllung Merkblatt lesen!

In Maschinen- oder Blockschrift ausfüllen

Nicht Zutreffendes streichen!

mit Anlagen

Nr.

Empfangsbestätigung erteilt am

Antrag

zu Grund des Bundesergänzungsgesetzes zur Entschädigung für Opfer der nationalsozialistischen Verfolgung (BRG) vom 19. 9. 1953 (BGBl. I S. 1387)

I. Anspruchsberechtigte(r)

1. Name: Kramer
 Vorname: Mark, Trauhner
 Geburtsort und -ort (Kreis, Land): 9. Februar 1924
Radomysl, Polen
 Familienstand: led. / verh. / verw. / gesch.
 Anzahl der Kinder: 3 Alter der Kinder: 1. Monate
 Staatsangehörigkeit: frühere: polnisch jetzige: USA
 2. Beruf: scholar
 Erlernter Beruf: scholar
 Jetzige berufliche Tätigkeit: Maschinenmacher
 Sind Sie selbst verfolgt worden? (siehe eigener Antrag) ja
 Wegen ihrer politischen Überzeugung oder aus Gründen der Rasse oder des Glaubens oder der Weltanschauung
 4. Leiten Sie Ihre Ansprüche aus der Verfolgung eines anderen ab? ja
 Ihr Familien- oder Rechtsverhältnis zum Verfolgten: sohn
 Bemerkung: Mina, geb. Salomon, (mutter) wurde auch in Ghetto Pambice in 1941 umgebracht.

II. Verfolgte(r)

(Nur ausfüllen, wenn Anspruchsberechtigte(r) [s. Abschnitt I, 1] Ansprüche aus der Verfolgung eines anderen [s. Abschnitt I, 4] ableitet)

1. Name: Kramer
 Vorname: Israel
 Geburtsort und -ort (Kreis, Land): 1895
Radomysl, Polen
 Letzter Wohnort Sitz (Kreis, Land): Radomysl, Polen
Targowa ul.
 (Straße und Haus-Nr.)
 Beschrieben am: in Dezember 1941
 wurden in Ghetto Pambice
 in (Kreis, Land):
 Bei juristischen Personen usw. Zeitpunkt der Auflösung:
 Staatsangehörigkeit: frühere: Polnisch letzte: Polnisch
 2. Beruf: scholar
 Erlernter Beruf: scholar
 Letzte berufliche Tätigkeit: scholar

- 3 -

IV. Entschädigungsansprüche werden angemeldet für:

- Schaden an Leben (§§ 14, 15 Abs. 6)
 Rente und Kapitalentschädigung als Hinterbliebenen(r) eines(r) durch nationalsozialistische Gewaltmaßnahmen getöteten oder an den Folgen solcher Maßnahmen verstorbenen Verfolgten:
- Schaden an Körper und Gesundheit (§ 15)
 a) Mollverfahren:
 b) Rente und Kapitalentschädigung:
 3. Schaden an Freiheit (§ 16)
 durch Freiheitsentziehung
 in E. A. L. Radomysl Wielki vom Okt. 1939 bis
 in Ghetto Pambice vom bis
 in K. Z. Plassow (436) vom bis
 in K. Z. Pambice (88213) vom bis
 in K. Z. Pambice vom bis
 in K. Z. Pambice vom bis
 insgesamt = 67 volle Monate

4. Schaden an Eigentum und Vermögen (§§ 18—24)

- durch Zerstörung, Veruntatung, Plünderung, Flucht oder Auswanderung:
- durch Sonderabgaben und Reichsfluchtsteuer:
- durch Geldstrafen, Bußen und Kosten:
- durch sonstige schwere Schädigung:

5. Schaden im beruflichen und wirtschaftlichen Fortkommen (§§ 25—55)

- durch Verdrängung aus oder Beschränkung in einer selbständigen Erwerbstätigkeit einschl. land- oder forstwirtschaftlicher oder gewerblicher Tätigkeit:
- in einem privaten Dienst- oder Arbeitsverhältnis durch Entlassung, vorzeitiges Ausscheiden oder Versetzung in eine erheblich geringer entlohnte Stelle:
- durch Ausschluss an Bezügen im öffentlichen Dienst für die Zeit vor dem 1. 4. 1950:
- durch Ausschluss von der erstrebten Ausbildung oder durch deren erzwungene Unterbrechung:

V. Erklärung über anderwärtig gestellte Wiedergutmachungsanträge und über die im Hinblick auf die Verfolgung durch den Nationalsozialismus erhaltenen Leistungen. (Reicht der Platz nicht aus, sind entsprechende Ausführungen auf besonderer Anlage zu machen)

- Wurden für die unter Abschnitt I und II bezeichneten Personen wegen der angegebenen Verfolgungsgründe bereits Entschädigungs- oder Schadenersatzansprüche geltend gemacht? ja / nein

Bei welchen Stellen im In- und Ausland (Behörden, Organisationen, Firmen, Privatpersonen)?	Wann?	Aktenzeichen

Sind über diese Anträge bereits Entscheidungen ergangen oder Vergleiche abgeschlossen worden? ja / nein
 Von oder vor welcher Stelle? Aktenzeichen?

Haben die unter Abschnitt I und II bezeichneten Personen im In- und Ausland Geld- oder Sachleistungen von Behörden, Organisationen, Firmen, Privatpersonen erhalten? ja / nein

Art der Leistungen	Von welchen Stellen?	Wann?	RM	DM

2. Wurden für die unter Abschnitt I und II bezeichneten Personen Rückerstattungsansprüche geltend gemacht? ja / nein

Wegen welcher Vermögensgegenstände?	Bei welchen Stellen?	Aktenzeichen:

GERMAN RECORDS VERIFYING CONCENTRATION CAMP INTERNMENT

OPPRESSION IN MY FAMILY

A year ago I had my Bar Mitzvah and at the service, my Great Uncle Mark started crying when he went up to do a prayer. I asked my mom why he was crying and she told me that he gets very emotional at family religious events. I asked her why and she gave me a tape of him telling the story:

Markus Kramer was born on February 8, 1924 in the town of Radamyl Wielki, Poland. He lived in a small house with his Mother, Dina, his Father Israel, and his three sisters Dvora, Tilla, and Esther. He had a large extended family of aunts, uncles, and cousins living in small towns all around.

In 1939 Germany invaded Poland, he was 15 years old then. The regular army was not cruel to the Jews. On many occasions the soldiers would come to their house to talk to Mark's father and to see his sisters because they were very pretty and all the boys liked them. Mark and his father would also sell the soldiers cigarettes.

Then the S.S. arrived. They gave the Jews one night to pack their belongings or all they could carry. In the morning they were herded into the town square and then loaded into wagons. Some of the wagons went right to a town called Dembice where the Jews would gather with others; the wagons that went to the left took the people to the cemetery to be shot. Mark and his family went to the right. Their Non - Jewish neighbors helped the S.S. find the hiding Jews and turned them in.

When they arrived in Dembice the S.S. made them sit in a field all night and wouldn't let them sleep by beating them occasionally. In the morning the S.S. put all the babies in potato sacks and threw them in wagons. They also put all the young men (including Mark) in other wagons. The rest they sorted out. Too old, they were shot, too young, they were shot too. Mark left on a wagon. It was the last time he saw his family.

The wagons took Mark and the other boys to an airplane factory called Jeshuff. He worked there for 9 to 11 months. The Ukrainian guards beat them worse than the Nazis did.

Next he was taken to Plaszow, a concentration camp near Krakow. The camp commandant wanted the marble headstones from the local cemetery to be built into a walkway from his house to the camp. The inmates first pulled up the headstones and built the walkway. Then they had to dig up the bodies and remove the gold teeth. Afterwards they filled up all the holes with the skeletons. The Jews then built their own barracks on top of the desecrated cemetery. Mark was the youngest person there at the age of 15.

The Germans picked certain Jews to help with communication etc. They were known as "Copas". Most were hated by the inmates because they often helped the S.S. by telling on the other Jews for better treatment.

One of the "Copas" was named Duvick and he took a liking to Mark because he was the youngest one there. In the future Mark would discover that Duvick would save his life more than once.

In Plaszow, when groups of men were being led off to be killed to be replaced by recently arrived stronger men, Duvick would transfer Mark to the new group. He did this over and over again.

One day, at the camp, one of the inmates said that there was another Kramer at the camp and that Mark should go look to see who it was. Mark went and found his cousin Sam who was 1 year younger than he was. They stayed together until they were liberated.

One night a young boy and a man were whistling a Russian song. They were grabbed and the next day all the inmates were marched out to a field to watch the two people be hanged.

For food they got 1 slice of bread at night and 1 cup of coffee in the morning. The people would eat anything they could and they did. The inmates didn't get tatoos like in the other concentration camps. They got bracelets and Mark's number was 85213.

One hot August day Mark was on clean up detail. He and 2 others went to the barracks to cool off. They were caught by an S.S. guard who whipped them severely. The tip of the whip hit his eye and knocked it halfway out. Duvick found him on the floor. He called a Jewish doctor in the camp and he hid Mark. Duvick had the doctor check him daily. He sneaked medicine and extra food to him. For four weeks he was hidden away with both eyes bandaged. Duvick covered for him being missing from roll call. Duvick continued to hide him while he wore a patch and learned to balance with sight in only one eye. If he were discovered he would be killed because he couldn't work.

About 1 year after the eye incident, Mark and Sam were transferred to Mauthausen, another concentration camp. Before they left the camp, the S.S. killed all the "Copas". Somehow, Uncle Mark thinks that Duvick escaped. Mauthausen was an extermination camp with gas chambers. Every day, the people were stripped down and sent off to the showers. They didn't know if they were going to be sprayed with gas or water. Before at the other camps they were allowed to have personal items, such as family pictures, but now everything was taken away.

Next Mark and Sam were sent to Melk, another extermination camp, which had crematoriums, or large ovens where they threw bodies in and burnt them up. They were constantly beaten and they had to march daily to a train, and then they were taken to work areas then back again. Mark eventually lost both his shoes so he told his cousin Sam he would say that he never got any (it was winter with slush on the ground). They were overheard by another inmate and turned in to the S.S. Sam and Mark were beaten so bad that they couldn't lie down on their wooden bunks for 1 week. By then he weighed about 60 pounds. At the age of 19, that was very thin.

About 1945 they were sent to Ebansee. It was so bad there that people gave up on living and just walked into the electrified gates.

On May 6, 1945 the Jews were liberated. They heard Allied planes flying overhead and the guards started running away and disappearing. Some of the guards tried to capture all the inmates and kill them and destroy all the evidence of the atrocities but they were more interested in escaping.

The allies arrived and set up food stations. They served macaroni and cheese and meat. Unfortunately, the people's systems couldn't handle the new kind of food because they were used to just bread. People were dropping like flies everywhere. Mark and Sam decided to eat just bread. So they wandered about the town near the camp and an elderly German woman took them in. She gave them clothes, medicine, and food and nursed them back to health. Sam still was sick and spent 1 and a half years in a hospital.

The allies took them to Linz, Austria and gave them food, clothing and a place to live. About six months later the allies helped establish a police force made up of displaced persons. Mark was one of the first who joined. The M.P.'s and Austrian police had to go through them in dealing with the displaced persons. Sam joined the force 2 years later.

Mark was there until January 7, 1949, when he left for the United States with Sam. On January 7, 1950 he married Minnie Simon, my grandmother's younger sister. They raised a family and worked until about 1973. Mark had to stop working due to physical problems from being in the concentration camps. Now he lives in California and is living a very happy life.